This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

1354

Baptist Union Theological Seminary

LIBRARY.

Library No. 3555 Shelf No. 26

Presented by Rev H. G. Weston DD

Chicago. 187 2

Class 208. Book St. 4. cop. 1.

University of Chicago Library

GIVEN BY

Besides the main topic this book also treats of

Subject No.	On page	Subject No.	On page

F
6
.S

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

THE

WORKS

OF

SAMUEL STENNETT, D. D.

LATE

PASTOR OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

ASSEMBLING IN

LITTLE WILD STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,

LONDON:

NOW FIRST COLLECTED INTO A BODY; WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS:

BY WILLIAM JONES,

Author of the History of the Christian Church, Biblical Cyclopædia, &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING:

I. DISCOURSES ON DOMESTIC DUTIES.

II. DISCOURSES ON THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG, 73, CHEAPSIDE.

1824.

Cameron & Hume, Printers,
Berwick.

1354.

TO THE

CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

ASSEMBLING IN

LITTLE WILD STREET,

NEAR

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES

ON

DOMESTIC DUTIES,

ARE,

WITH GREAT RESPECT,

INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

AND

OBLIGED HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

144100

ADVERTISEMENT.

A SERIOUS attention to Domestic Duties hath ever been considered, by wise and good people, as a matter of the last importance to the civil and religious interests of mankind. To persuade men to the faithful and cheerful discharge of these duties, is the object of the following Discourses. The author is sensible that there are many excellent treatises on most of the subjects that compose this volume. But he presumes, that the character of the present times, too sadly marked by inattention to these important matters; and the possibility of placing them in a light somewhat different from that in which they have been usually considered, are sufficient reasons to justify this attempt. With great diffidence he submits it to the candour of the Public: not doubting but his views, however he may have failed in the execution of his plan, will meet the approbation of the friends of virtue and religion; and engage their good wishes for its favourable reception, and their cordial prayers for its success.—The first discourse, which has a general respect to *all* the duties of benevolence, was intended as an introductory one to a plan of which this volume is only a part. Whether the plan will ever be completed is uncertain. But this circumstance is here mentioned as an apology for what might otherwise be deemed an impropriety.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

DISCOURSE I.

The Duties of Benevolence considered and enforced.——*In Two Parts.*

PHIL. II. 4.——*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,* Page 1

DISCOURSE II.

Family Religion in general.——*In Two Parts.*

JOSH. XXIV. 15.——*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,* 22

DISCOURSE III.

Family Worship.——*In Two Parts.*

ROM. XVI. 5.—*Likewise greet the church that is in their house,* 45

DISCOURSE IV.

Reciprocal Duties of Husbands and Wives.——*In Two Parts.*

EPH. V. 33.——*Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband,* 70

DISCOURSE V.

Duties of Parents to their Children.——*In Three Parts.*

PROV. XXII. 6.—*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,* 94

DISCOURSE VI.

Duties of Children to their Parents.——*In Two Parts.*

EPH. VI. 1—3.—*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth,* 133

DISCOURSE VII.

Duties of Servants to Masters.——*In Three Parts.*

EPH. VI. 5—8.—*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free,* 162

DISCOURSE VIII.

Duties of Masters to Servants.——*In Two Parts.*

EPH. VI. 9.—*And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him,* 198

DISCOURSE IX.

Domestic Friendship.——*In Three Parts.*

PSALM CXXXIII.—*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts*

of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, Page 221

DISCOURSE X.

Hospitality.——*In Two Parts.*

1 PET. IV. 9.—*Use hospitality one to another, without grudging,* 257

DISCOURSE XI.

Convivial Intercourse.——*In Two Parts.*

JOB I. 4, 5.—*And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually,* 282

DISCOURSE XII.

Heaven considered as a Family.——*In Two Parts.*

JOHN XIV. 2.—*In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you,* 305

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

DISCOURSE I.

Of Parables in general; and the leading ideas of this in particular.——*In Two Parts.*

MATT. XIII. 3.—*And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow,* 331

DISCOURSE II.

The Character of Inattentive Hearers considered.——*In Two Parts.*

MATT. XIII. 4.—*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured them up,* 360

DISCOURSE III.

The Character of Enthusiastic Hearers considered.——*In Two Parts.*

MATT. XIII. 5, 6.—*Some seed fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away,* 391

DISCOURSE IV.

The Character of Worldly-minded hearers considered.——*In Two Parts.*

MATT. XIII. 7.—*And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them,* 417

DISCOURSE V.

The Character of Sincere Hearers considered.——*In Two Parts.*

MATT. XIII. 8.—*But other [seeds] fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold,* 444

DISCOURSE VI.

The Duty of Consideration explained and enforced.——*In Two Parts.*

MATT. XIII. 9.—*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear,* 472

DISCOURSE I.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

THE DUTIES OF BENEVOLENCE CONSIDERED AND ENFORCED.

PHIL. II. 4.—*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

As man was made for society, it is the duty and interest of every one to contribute what lies in his power to the general good. This is a plain dictate of nature, and is abundantly confirmed and enforced by Scripture. Whoever considers the divine benevolence which breathes through the gospel, and which shone so illustriously in the countenance of its great author the Lord Jesus Christ, must clearly see that it is impossible for a man to be a genuine Christian, without feeling, in a degree at least, that generous warmth which a public spirit inspires. When the Sun of Righteousness first arose upon this miserably cold and benighted world, the balmy influence of his grace diffused itself through the breasts of thousands. Men who had hitherto lived in strife, *hateful and hating one another*, now felt their fierce and malevolent passions subside and die away, and their bosoms glow with all the godlike ardour of divine friendship and love.

Of this character the apostle Paul was an eminent instance. No man better understood the gospel, and no man ever drank more deeply into the spirit of it than he did. In his sermons and epistles he soberly reasons on the great truths of Christianity, and in the course of his life shews what admirable effects the belief of those truths is capable of producing. Persuaded of their divine authority, and feeling their efficacy on his heart,

he suffers himself to be transported, under the influence of the noblest enthusiasm, into a series of the most benevolent exertions for the good of mankind. With a disinterestedness that reflects a real lustre upon his character, he assures the Philippians in this context, that the spread of the gospel, though it were by men whose motives were base and unfriendly to himself, afforded him a sublime joy. And however he could not but ardently wish, fatigued as he was with the incessant labours of his public ministry, to be dismissed hence to the society of the blessed above, yet *for their furtherance and joy of faith he was willing to abide in the flesh.* And having thus, upon the most generous grounds, conciliated their affections to himself, he improves the interest he had therein to the purpose of animating them to the duties of a public spirit, *If there be,* says he, *any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife, or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* And so he adds in our text, *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

No pains, I presume, need be taken to shew that this admonition is as properly addressed to us as to the Philippians, especially those of us who are united in the bands of Christian fellowship. It consists, you see, of two parts. The apostle earnestly dissuades us from *a private selfish spirit,* and as passionately exhorts us to *a public and benevolent spirit.*

FIRST, Each of these tempers we will explain. And then,

SECONDLY, Consider our obligations to avoid the one, and to cultivate the other.

FIRST, Let us explain the *evil* we mean to dissuade you from, and the *duty* we wish to recommend.

I. The *evil* we are cautioned against is, a private and selfish spirit—*Look not every man on his own things.*

In the same manner the apostle addresses the Corinthians, *Let no man seek his own: but every man another's wealth* [a]; reminding them in another place, that *Charity seeketh not her own* [b]. By our *own things* he means our own proper interest;

[a] 1 Cor. x. 24. [b] 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

emolument, or advantage: and by *looking on* our own things the considering of our interest, being anxious about it, and taking every necessary measure to promote it. Now the prohibition is not absolute. This is evident from the reason and nature of the thing, and from the apostle's using the connective particle *also* in the latter clause of the text: *Let not every man look on his own things*, that is, on his own things *only, but also on the things of others.* Here then it will be of importance to enquire how far, and under what restrictions, we may be allowed to consult our own interests. Our interests may be considered as either *spiritual* or *temporal.*

By our *spiritual interests* we mean the health, prosperity, and final salvation of our souls. It is of infinite consequence to a guilty depraved creature, that he be restored to the favour and likeness of his offended Creator; and so escape the wrath to come, and attain to the happiness of heaven. Wherefore, if dread of misery, and desire of happiness, are passions connatural to us, and if the evils and blessings just mentioned are the greatest imaginable; doubtless it is not only allowable, but our incumbent duty, to take every possible measure to avoid the former, and obtain the latter. To be indifferent about our salvation is highly criminal; to make it our first and principal object highly commendable. Such is the language both of reason and Scripture. And it were easy to shew, that the minding religion is not only infinitely beneficial to a man himself, but is the direct means to dispose him to look after the interests of others, and to enable him more effectually to promote them. If however, under a notion of taking care of their souls, and acquiring an extraordinary degree of exalted piety, men retire from society into silence and inactivity, they give too sad evidence that they are of a private selfish spirit: and it is much to be questioned, amidst all their splendid professions, whether they have any just idea of the nature of religion, or have ever entered into the genuine spirit of it. But the conduct we are cautioned against in our text, hath respect chiefly to our temporal interests.

Now our *temporal interests* may be all comprehended under the ideas of health, prosperity, and reputation. And surely no one will assert that these are to be treated with perfect indiffer-

ence and contempt. Indeed enthusiasm, under the specious pretence of piety, has precipitated some people into austerities strongly expressive of this. But enthusiasm itself can never make men fall in love with poverty and misery. The utmost it can do is to reconcile them to these evils upon the idea of acquiring applause, a kind of good which in their apprehension will more than balance all their painful feelings. For this boasted mortification of theirs is only a bartering two sorts of earthly good, namely, ease and wealth, for a third, fame, which they account more splendid. But the truth is, these enjoyments, in their proper place, have, each of them, their value.

As to *Health*, we not only may but ought to take care of it. The same apostle who spake the words of our text, bids us *do ourselves no harm a*, and assures us that *no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it b*. Nor is it merely for the purpose of enjoying life that we are to covet health, but for the further purpose of usefulness. For it is impossible that a man oppressed with pain and sickness should attend with vigour, however benevolent his heart may be, to the active duties of social life. If therefore we would serve our generation, we may, we ought to take every measure in our power to preserve and establish our health.

In like manner we may affirm concerning *Wealth*, that it is a real good. It will procure us the necessaries and accommodations of life, and put it in our power to make multitudes of our fellow-creatures happy. There is, therefore, neither wisdom nor virtue in treating riches with an heir of haughty contempt, as certain visionaries have done. Indeed, as to these men, it is to be apprehended, without breach of charity, that a criminal passion for ease and sloth is at the bottom of all this affected self-denial of theirs. No. Industry is a virtue. *He that is diligent in business shall stand before kings, and not before mean men c*. And *he who provides not for his own, especially for those of his own house, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel d*. *Study to be quiet*, says our apostle, *and to do your own business e*. And in another place, *If a man will not work, neither should he eat f*. The ingenuity, shrewdness, and strength

a Acts xvi. 28. *b* Eph. v. 29. *c* Prov. xxii. 29.
d 1 Tim. v. 8. *e* 1 Thess. iv. 11. *f* 2 Thess. iii. 10.

our Creator has endowed us with, are applied to their proper objects, when used, under the restrictions that will be hereafter mentioned, to the purposes of improving our worldly circumstances, and so augmenting our own happiness and that of others.

And if bodily health and worldly prosperity may be lawfully desired and pursued, so may *Reputation* and honour likewise. It is an argument of a benevolent heart to wish to please, and of a generous mind to aim to excel. *A good name is better than precious ointment a.* No virtuous man can be indifferent to his reputation. As he holds wisdom, integrity and piety, in the highest esteem, and actually does in his measure possess them, so it would be affected humility, and putting an unnatural force upon himself, to decline all passion for that respect to which he stands entitled among his fellow-creatures.

You will say then, what is the true character of that private or selfish spirit which the apostle condemns? or, when may a man be said so to look on his own things as to merit the censure implied in our text? To this it is replied,—He is of a private selfish spirit who consults his outward ease, emolument, and honour, to the injury of his own best interests, and to the prejudice of the real interests of other men. These opposite interests do often come into competition, and so give occasion for a conduct which indelibly marks the characters of men as selfish or benevolent.

There is a criminal sense in which men may be said in regard of *themselves*, and without any reference to others, to seek their own things. Man is a complex being. He consists of soul and body; and the former is of far greater value than the latter. He therefore who pays such an attention to his bodily health, ease, and pleasure, as to be thereby precluded from those restraints on his animal appetites, and from those means of religion, which have a direct tendency to promote the welfare and happiness of his soul; is chargeable with self-love, and is guilty of the great sin and folly of sacrificing his superior to his inferior interests. He looks on his own things, pampers his body to the destruction of his soul. The same may be said of him who makes the profits, or the honours of the world his grand

a Eccl. vii. 1.

object, to the neglect if not contempt of heavenly riches, and an interest in the favour of that great Being who made him.

But we are here principally concerned with the pursuits of mankind in the aspect they bear towards *others.* He certainly is of a private selfish spirit, who will not forego his temporal emolument for the *salvation of his neighbour's soul.* If God has given me talents for public instruction, and I will not be at the pains to meditate, read, study, preach, and exhort, but on the contrary spend my time in indolence and self-gratification, I seek my own things to the injury of others. So if God has given me wealth, and I will apply none of it to the purpose of assisting others in their labours for the spiritual good of mankind, but on the contrary avariciously hoard up my gains, or squander them away on my pleasures; I am guilty of the same crime. The like may be said also of that unmanly, not to say unchristian, dread of the censure of a vain world, which holds too many back from efforts of the most generous kind for the salvation of their fellow-creatures. In short, it is a base and selfish temper to the last degree to prefer any worldly advantage whatever to the refined pleasure of being the instrument of saving an immortal soul. Again,

A selfish spirit is further to be considered in its reference to the *temporal interests of others.* The most shocking expression of it, is that of accumulating the enjoyments of this life to ourselves, at the expence of the happiness, yea even the lives of those around us. Innumerable wretched instances of this sort disgrace the faithful pages of history, and daily afflict the eye of humanity. What are the frauds practised in commerce, the contentions that prevail in societies, and the horrible ravages of war, but the effects of this miserable temper? Many, however, there are who dare not proceed to these lengths; yet their own interest they pursue to the neglect of that of others. Although, in their eager chace after riches, honours, and pleasures, they leap not over the mounds of strict right and equity; yet they allow themselves little time to contemplate the miseries of their fellow-creatures, and to stretch forth the hand of benevolence to their assistance. Nor does the character censured in our text belong to these only. They too are of a private selfish spirit, who will not, at least in some instances, give up their own rights, and forego some advantages they might lawfully claim, in order to contribute to the

happiness of others. If a man has no generosity in his temper, though he is not strictly speaking unjust or inhuman, he fails in his duty as a man, and sinks infinitely beneath the denomination of a Christian, who glories in the character of being a man of a benevolent spirit.—And this leads us,

II. To explain and illustrate more particularly the duties of a Public-spirit.—*Let every man look on the things of others.*—Here two or three things are to be premised before we proceed: as,

First, That the interest of the whole is to be preferred to that of a part.

When the good of certain individuals comes into competition with that of the community at large, the former is no doubt to be sacrificed to the latter. *It is better that one man should die for the people, than that the whole nation perish a.* When the attaining an object of great importance to our country, to the church of God, or to our families, requires the omission of some offices of kindness to particular persons, which we would otherwise gladly render them; such omission becomes a duty rather than a sin. In short, a man of a public spirit will wish to do all the good he can; and since he has neither opportunity, or ability, equal to every service that may be demanded of him, it is his duty to exert himself in such ways as he judges upon the whole will best promote the interests of society. From whence it follows, that we should be cautious how we hastily censure others, as of a private and selfish spirit, because they do not take an active part with us in every scheme for the public good, to which our impetuosity would urge them. They may be pursuing a line of conduct, which Providence hath pointed out to them, and which may more essentially contribute to the general welfare than that to which we would divert their attention.

Secondly, The spiritual interests of others are to be preferred to their temporal.

This appears from what has been already observed, and must strike every considerate man as a most important truth. If there be a God, the duties we owe him ought to take the lead of those we owe our neighbour. If our souls are of infinitely greater value than our bodies, and the present is only an introduction to a future eternal life, there can be no doubt that the most im-

a John xi. 50.

portant concerns of a worldly kind should yield to those of religion, when they come into competition with each other. The civil immunities of nations, societies, and families, are objects of great magnitude, but their moral and religious interests of much greater. And what farther entitles the latter to the precedence of the former is, the direct and mighty influence which virtue and piety unquestionably have upon men's temporal happiness. Here permit me to observe, that this reasoning stamps a dignity upon the character of those, however mean and contemptible their external appearance and circumstances may be, whom divine Providence hath raised up and sent to preach the gospel in the world. Again,

Thirdly, The nearer the relation the greater is the regard we owe to one another.

Charity, we usually say, begins at home. And it is a plain dictate of nature, that offices of benevolence should originate among our most intimate connections, and so proceed by gradual progression to those at the remotest distance from us. Men eminent for a disinterested and public spirit, have generally given distinguished proofs of a humane and friendly disposition. Nor is much to be expected from those, however warm their professions of zeal for the public good may be, who pay little or no attention to the important obligations of consanguinity, neighbourhood, and private friendship.——These things premised, we go on to speak of the duties of benevolence under the following heads, namely, those we owe—to mankind in general —our country—the church of Christ—and individuals.

1. There are duties we owe *to men as men*, and purely on the ground of their being of the same species with ourselves.

All our fellow-creatures, whatever may be their situations, characters, or circumstances, are entitled to our sympathy and benevolence. A good man will wish well to every one of his brethren of mankind, sincerely pray for their happiness, and heartily concur in measures for extending the blessings of civil and religious liberty far and wide. The attention he pays to his family, friends, and neighbourhood, will not exclude those from his regards who are beyond the circle wherein he moves. His predilection in favour of his native country will not excite animosity in his breast against the subjects of other states. Nor

will the just prejudices he has conceived against the ignorance, superstition, and bigotry of Pagans, Mahometans, and Papists, or against those who have injured him, obliterate the compassionate feelings of humanity towards them. Detesting those wretched maxims of policy and self-interest which tend to the dividing mankind, and alienating them from one another, he will consider himself obliged, upon the grand principle that God hath made men of one blood, and that his sun shines upon the evil and the good, to contribute what in him lies to the welfare of all. In short, as religion confirms and improves that universal philanthropy which nature teaches, so the Christian feels himself disposed not only to the duties of truth, sincerity, and justice, but to those of civility, sympathy, and love towards the whole race of mankind.

2. The duties we owe to our *country* come next to be enumerated.

These are of a more particular description than the former. They are the result of a regard due to others, not as men only, but as men inhabiting one country, cast into one civil society, and subsisting under one form of government. This regard or attachment is what we call patriotism, a kind of instinct implanted in our breasts for wise and noble purposes; and which, therefore, a good man will cherish and cultivate to the utmost of his power. And the duties of it are such as these: in general, the seeking the safety, honour, and prosperity of our country. The considering the enemies of it, whether foreign or domestic, as our enemies. The using our endeavours to detect every insidious, and to defeat every open attempt against it. The contending earnestly for its civil and religious rights and liberties. The paying all due allegiance, honour, and submission to its magistrates supreme and subordinate. The rendering tribute to whom tribute is due. The leading peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. The endeavouring to promote harmony and good will, condescension and subordination among all orders of men. And, in a word, the exerting ourselves, as far as our abilities and stations will admit, to check the progress of vice and profaneness, and to promote virtue and religion. Which leads me,

3. To the duties we owe, as Christians, to *the church of God.*

Here our views are confined within a circle of a different description from the former. All good men, wherever situated and however distinguished from one another, compose one large family, society, or kingdom, of which God is the Father, and Christ is the Sovereign and King. And our duty, as belonging to this one catholic church or body, is, in general, to maintain steadily the grand principles on which it is united, to contend earnestly for its rights and privileges, to endeavour, by all possible means, to promote its prosperity and increase, and to cherish in our breasts a cordial and unreserved affection to every individual of which it is composed.

But as the various situations and circumstances of Christians, and their different modes of thinking respecting matters which do not affect the existence of the whole, make it necessary that they should be formed into distinct societies, so there are duties which the members of such societies owe to one another. And it is an important expression of a public spirit to pay a faithful attention to these duties, as hereby not only the particular interests of these separate societies are promoted, but the general welfare and glory of the whole. And here I might mention the various mutual offices required of ministers and their people towards each other, in regard of public worship, the celebration of divine ordinances, and the maintenance of good order, fellowship, and love. He is a man of a public catholic spirit, who in respect of these matters seeks not his own things but the things of Christ, and can say with the apostle, *For me to live is Christ*, it is my grand object to promote his kingdom and interest: who endeavours with all his might to preserve the Christian doctrine and institutions inviolable; and to that end often foregoes his own ease, emolument, and honour: and who, abhorring from his very heart a narrow, uncandid, bigotted spirit, feels a cordial affection for all other Christian societies, who hold Christ as the head, though they differ in many circumstantials of doctrine and duty; and most heartily concurs with them in every laudable scheme for the general good.

4. And lastly, the duties of benevolence are to be further considered in their reference to *families and individuals*.

And here I forbear to enumerate all the offices required of us towards each other, in the various characters of husbands and

wives, parents and children, brethren and sisters, masters and servants, buyers and sellers, relatives, friends, neighbours, and members of civil society. These offices are almost infinitely diversified, yet they are all the objects of his attention who looks not on his own things only, but also on the things of others.

A busy, officious temper ought, however, to be particularly guarded against. Far was it from the apostle's intention to give any countenance to so little, mean, and base a passion, as that of looking or prying into other people's affairs. A passion that has done infinite mischief in the world and in the church. He particularly inveighs against it in his epistles to the Thessalonians and to Timothy, where he describes persons of this character, as *walking disorderly, working not at all, and being busy bodies* a. And, as *learning to be idle, wandering about from house to house, tatlers, and speaking things which they ought not* b. A man of a public and benevolent spirit is infinitely superior to every thing of this sort. He meddles not with the concerns of others. Yet glad would he be to make every individual with whom he is connected happy, and sincerely does he lament it, that too often, through human frailty and criminal neglect, he fails in his duty.—This general view of the duties to which the apostle exhorts us in the text, and which are hereafter to be more particularly considered, shall at present suffice.—Our obligations to the regular and cheerful discharge of the duties of a public spirit, remain now to be considered. But this will be the subject of our attention the next opportunity.

PART II.

We have particularly considered the evil we are cautioned against in the text, namely, a private or selfish spirit—*Look not every man on his own things.* And we have explained and illustrated the temper and conduct opposed to it, namely, a benevolent and public spirit—*Let every man look also on the things of others.* And we now proceed,

Secondly, To enquire into our obligations to the regular and cheerful discharge of the duties of Benevolence.

1. We will begin with the obligation which results from *the relation we stand in to each other.*

a 2 Thess. iii. 11. b 1 Tim. v. 13.

There are relations subsisting among mankind, and these relations do of necessity beget reciprocal duties. As for instance, the moment I contemplate the relation between parents and their children, the obligation of the former to love the latter, and of the latter to reverence the former, forces itself upon my mind. There is no separating the ideas. And the same may be said of every other relation among reasonable beings. Let men be placed in what connection they may with each other, that connection will, it must, produce some consequent obligation. And that obligation, supposing the connection to subsist, is in the reason and nature of the thing immutable. All the movements of a watch are adapted to one great end, and it is by the regular operation of the several parts, which bear an immediate relation to each other, that that end is attained. So it is in the moral world. The various orders of rational beings that exist bear certain relations to each other, and were the several duties resulting from these relations rightly and uniformly discharged, the happiness of every individual would be secured, and so the general good of the whole, which is the grand object, would be attained.

Now they who look on their own things, and not on the things of others, do violate the obligations which result from the relation they stand in to their fellow-creatures. And how very absurd and criminal is such a conduct! Will they deny that any relation subsists between them and mankind? No, it cannot be denied. Will they deny that these relations oblige them to certain duties? This would be to offer violence to common sense, and to tear the whole fabric of this moral system to pieces. Will they say, they are no further obliged to consult the interests of others than the doing it will tend in their apprehension to promote their own interests? If they may be allowed to say so, others may too; and then not only the welfare of the whole will be defeated, but of individuals, and in the long run of themselves likewise. On the contrary, it were easy to shew (and will be shewn afterwards) that by seeking the things of others we seek our own things; and that however in many instances our present worldly advantage may be affected by our attention to the general good, we shall yet be gainers upon the whole: not to say how the common feelings of humanity, upon

a little recollection, are hurt by the wretched baseness of a selfish spirit. A man of this character is his own tormentor; for selfishness begets envy, envy malevolence, and malevolence torment. Whence the philosopher, seeing a spiteful fellow look sad, wittily said, he knew not what to think was the cause of his melancholy, whether some disaster of his own, or some good fortune of another. What are they then doing who void of all generosity (it may be added justice and humanity too) obstinately refuse obedience to the admonition in our text? They are in arms against their whole species; hostile to all social connections, domestic, civil, and religious; and—strange infatuation!—enemies to themselves.

2. To the duties of benevolence we are obliged by *the express command of God.*

That great Being hath signified his will to us two ways, namely, by the light of nature, and by the holy scriptures. As to the former, if the reasoning under the last head be just, then that reasoning is the voice of God. He has established these relations among mankind, and endowed us with capacities to perceive their fitness to the ends of their appointment, and the duties resulting from them. By so doing, therefore, he has authoritatively required of us the fulfilment of these duties, and every failure therein is not only an injury done to our fellow-creatures, but a direct violation of the command of our Creator, thus signified to us by the dictates of nature.

But, as our reason is enervated and depraved by the general apostacy of mankind, and so through weakness and prejudice we err; he has given us a second edition of the law of nature in the Bible. Here we are commanded *to love the Lord with all our heart, and soul, and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves* a. And here we have these relations particularly explained, and the obligations resulting from them urged upon us by a variety of motives the most interesting and important. If we stand at the foot of Mount Sinai, we hear the law pronounced by the blessed God himself with a majesty and terror that cannot fail of exciting the profoundest reverence and dread. If we go to the prophets for instruction, we have not only the positive declarations of the divine will, but such reasonings there-

a Luke x. 27.

on as are level to the plainest understanding, and addressed to all the feelings of the human heart. If, again, we sit at the feet of the divine Jesus to receive the law at his lips, we have the whole system of moral obligation laid open to our view, with a clearness and pathos that infinitely surpasses what was to be met with in the schools of philosophers, or the colleges of Jewish teachers. The apostles too, under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, fail not to exhort us to the duties we owe one another, and to urge them upon us by those sublime motives peculiar to the gospel, which they were commissioned to publish throughout the whole world. If then the Scriptures are the word of God, it is his command, signified to us in the most plain and authoritative manner, that *we look not every one on his own things only, but every man also on the things of others.* And wilful disobedience to such authority cannot fail to expose men to the heaviest punishment.

3. Our obligations to the duties of benevolence receive the noblest support from *the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Such is the admirable construction of the gospel that it throws light upon the duties we owe one another, and enflames our breasts with a holy emulation to excel all around us in the discharge of them. The apostle had no sooner given the admonition in our text, but he felt himself transported almost into an ecstasy by this divine argument, which instantly rose to his view. *Let this mind,* says he, *be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* What divine philanthropy was this! We had broken the law of our creation, had torn asunder the sacred obligations of social duty, were become selfish, malevolent, and diabolical, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. It was fit then that the resentments of Heaven should be expressed against such guilt, that the authority of the supreme Governor of the world should be publicly asserted, and that the general good of his universal empire should be maintained. But it were earnestly to be wished, mercy would at the same time

say, that some at least of these miserable delinquents might escape the tremendous consequences of their guilt, and be restored to a capacity of again enjoying the exalted pleasures of social life in their highest perfection. But how are these objects to be attained? No human mind surely could devise an expedient. Or, if imagination could have suggested the grand expedient which hath been adopted, it would yet have been incredible that there should exist love in heaven of such magnitude as to carry it into effect. But such love there was in the bosom of God. Hear, O hear the tidings with wonder and joy!

The Son of God arrays himself in human flesh, and regardless of his honour, emolument and ease, as a man, voluntarily offers his life, amidst unparalleled indignities and sufferings, a victim to provoked justice for our accumulated guilt. What an instance of disinterested benevolence this! the astonishment of angels and men! He looked not on his own but our things. *He pleased not himself, but suffered the reproaches of them that reproached his Father to fall upon him* [a]. So he has stamped an authority upon the obligations resulting from social connections, which the infliction of the most tremendous punishment on the immediate violaters of these obligations could never have done. And so he has possessed us of an argument to look every one on the things of others, which, methinks, it should be impossible for the human heart not to feel. Behold, Christian, your Saviour bleeding on the cross, to expiate the offences you have committed against the laws of humanity, compassion, and love; and say whether you ought not to forgive those who have injured you, to draw a veil of charity over the frailties and mistakes of your offending brethren, to commiserate the distresses of the afflicted, and to do the utmost in your power to diffuse happiness among all around you.

4. The *example* of men eminent for their public spirit, comes next to be considered, in order to animate us to our duty.

Many instances of this sort we meet with in profane history; though, alas! it must be acknowledged, that the benevolence for which the wiser heathens, most of them, were so renowned, was disgraced with not a little vanity, self-applause, and regard for their own interest. The Scriptures, however, furnish us

[a] Rom. xv. 3.

with truly illustrious examples of this description, which demand our most grateful recollection, and our most careful imitation.

Moses the man of God holds a high rank in the list of those, who sought not their own things but the things of others. *He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season a;* and cheerfully renounced all pretensions to the crown of Egypt, that he might become the deliverer of his oppressed brethren the Israelites. And when the rebellion of that perverse people against God, and their ungrateful murmurings against him, had like to have brought down instant vengeance upon their heads; such was his public spirit, that he interposed all his influence with Heaven on their behalf, and with a generosity that scarce admits of a parallel, thus passionately expresses himself on the occasion, *Now, O Lord, if thou wilt, forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written b.* The flattering prospect of the erection of his own family into a great nation, upon the ruins of this people who so justly deserved to be devoted to destruction, could not subdue the unconquerable attachment he felt to their interest c. And so far was he from wishing to accumulate all the honours, peculiar to the prophetic character, to himself and a few others, that he most sincerely wished that *all the Lord's people were prophets d.* In short, his story exhibits to our view one continued series of the most disinterested and painful exertions for the good of mankind. A great many other examples I might mention of men of a public and benevolent spirit, whose characters and actions shine with distinguished lustre in the book of God, such as *Joshua, Gideon, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Nehemiah,* and others.

The apostles too were all of them famous for their unwearied attention to the public good, and none among them more so than he who spoke the language of the text. His life was a striking comment on the passage before us. So far was he from looking on his own things, that amidst his zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of men, he lost almost all idea of his own private and personal interests. And it was with a view not to acquire applause, but to conciliate the regards of the Corinthians

a Heb. xi. 25.
b Exod. xxxii. 32.
c Exod. xxxii. 10.
d Num. xi. 29.

to his ministry, and thereby promote their welfare, that he gives them such a recital of his sufferings and actions, as shews him to have been of all men the most disinterested and benevolent. —*In labours*, says he, *I have been more abundant: in stripes above measure: in prisons more frequent: in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck: a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not a?* Nor must I forget to mention a passionate expression that drops from his pen, when speaking concerning his countrymen the Jews, which breathes the noblest patriotism, and shews him to have been cast in the same mould with his great ancestor Moses: *I have great heaviness*, says he, *and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh b.*

But the temper and conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ, when here on earth, exhibit the most striking features of that character we mean to recommend and wish you to attain. Of the great object of his mission, which was generously to offer his life a sacrifice for sin, we have already spoken. His actions, during the course of his public ministry, are what we have now in view. And these were the most benevolent that can be imagined. Did he seek his own things, when at the age of twelve years he disputed with the doctors in the temple? *Wist ye not*, says he to his parents when they sought him sorrowing, *that I must be about my Father's business c?* Did he consult his own interest, when proof against all the insidious attacks of Satan, and all the flattering prospects of worldly wealth and grandeur, he devoted himself to the painful service of the ministry? Did he court the applause of men, when he boldly set himself to op-

a 2 Cor. xi. 22—29. b Rom. ix. 2, 3. c Luke ii. 49.

pose the errors, prejudices, and vices of the times? Were power and splendour his object, when he declined the pressing instances of thousands of people, who, having been miraculously fed by his bounty, would have fain taken him by force and made him a king? Did he affect ease and self-gratification, when travelling on foot from village to village to preach the gospel, he denied himself often the common refreshments of life? Did he aim to please himself, when, though he had it in his power to escape them, he submitted to the vilest indignities that could be cast on him? On the contrary, what illustrious proofs did he give of the generosity of his heart, in his unremitting exertions for the temporal and spiritual good of mankind! Now we see him amidst a crowd of poor, abject, wretched beings, the blind, the deaf, the halt, and the like, dispensing with a gracious smile, the blessings of health, ease and happiness among them. Now raising the dead from their graves, and delivering them again into the embraces of their mourning relatives. Now entering the cottage of the helpless widow, and mingling his tears with hers: and now taking little children into his arms, and blessing them. And then we behold him in the temple, and in the streets of Jerusalem, in the towns of Galilee and Judea, and in the chief places of concourse, instructing the people with unwearied attention, pouring tears of anguish over their spiritual maladies, and beseeching them to accept life and salvation at his hands. In short, from the instant he appeared on the stage of action to the tragical moment he passed off it, all concern for his own temporal interests was absorbed in that he nobly felt for others.

Forgive me that I have enlarged so particularly on this head of discourse. Example hath usually greater efficacy than precept. It teaches and persuades at one and the same time. And I cannot help flattering myself with the hope that, with these patterns before our eyes, we shall feel ourselves irresistibly impelled to the duties of a public spirit. It remains now to be observed,

5. And lastly, that generously to consult the interest of others, is in effect to consult *our own interest*.

This is an argument addressed to a passion which every one feels, a passion which cannot be eradicated from the human

breast, and which, when duly regulated, will not fail to operate to the general good.—Here let us advert a moment to the refined and exalted pleasure, which results from the idea of being the instruments of communicating happiness to our fellow-creatures. What a gratification must it be to a man of a generous spirit, to rescue a family from poverty and wretchedness, and to restore cheerfulness and joy to the gloomy mansion of the widow and fatherless! How exquisite must be the sensations of an affectionate parent, whilst he realizes, in all the future honour, happiness, and usefulness of his rising offspring, the rich and lasting fruits of his unwearied attention to their best interests! How great must be the satisfaction which that man feels, who from the purest motives risks his ease, honour, and life, in the defence of the civil and religious liberties of his country, and especially if his prudent and spirited efforts to that end prove happily successful! And O who can describe the joy that must circulate around the heart of the faithful minister of Christ, who, amidst all his painful labours in the cause of truth and religion, has ground to believe that this and that immortal soul will, through his means, escape the miseries of hell, and attain to the felicity and glory of heaven! Whatever be the self-denial, pain, and affliction, which men endure, whilst thus nobly forgetful of their own things, they look attentively on the things of others; it is all more than compensated by these refined pleasures which accompany their pursuits, and will be infinitely more so by the glorious rewards which shall in the end be conferred on them. It was a saying which frequently dropped from the lips of our divine Master, in the days of his pilgrimage here on earth, *It is more blessed to give than to receive* [a]. And this saying of his has been found to be true by the happy experience of thousands.

It is further to be observed, that our seeking the interest of others is the laying them under an obligation to seek our interest. It is not indeed every one that discharges the obligation. Some have it not in their power, and too many, so disingenuous is their nature, have it not in their disposition. Horrid instances there are in our world of base ingratitude! Yet the man who is habituated to acts of benevolence, and cheerfully

a Acts xx. 35.

spends his life in the service of his fellow-creatures, will meet with many returns of kindness. They who have shared of his beneficence will, at least some of them, mingle their tears with his when he is in affliction, and step forth to his assistance in the hours of danger and distress. *The blessing of him that was ready to perish*, will come upon him; and the prayer of *the widow, whose heart he has caused to sing for joy a*, will ascend to heaven on his behalf. How fair the inheritance which many of a public spirit have enjoyed in the affections of thousands around them! What tears of genuine sorrow have been poured over their remains, when committed to the silent grave! And how sweetly have their characters been embalmed in the grateful bosoms of numerous surviving friends and relatives! But even admitting that gratitude were to take its final farewell of our world, and that the generously looking on the things of others were a direct means, through the miserable perverseness of mankind, to entail upon us poverty, neglect, and abuse; yet such disinterested conduct will not fail to meet the divine approbation, and to be largely rewarded in another world.

And here we are naturally led to speak of the evidence arising from the character we have been recommending to the uprightness of a man's heart towards God. There is no genuine Christian who does not prefer the divine favour to every other enjoyment; and who does not wish above all things to have the grand question, whether he is in friendship with Heaven, decided to his satisfaction. Now what better evidence can a man possess upon this important point, next to the witnessing of the Holy Spirit, than what results from his participating the same divine temper, which actuated the blessed Jesus in all he did and suffered for our sakes? *Let this mind be in you*, says the apostle in the verse following the text, *which was also in Christ Jesus*. And what was this mind but that which we have been so largely describing in this discourse? God is love. His moral perfections are all of them so many different modifications of love. The gospel is a superstructure which wisdom has erected on this foundation, love. And love is the feature which prevailed in the countenance of our Saviour, and expressed itself more strongly than any other excellence in all his actions here

a Job xxix. 13.

on earth. And now, can a man have this same mind in him which Christ had? Can he feel in his breast a tender sympathy for the distressed? Can he passionately wish the happiness of all around him? Can he make their welfare his object, even to his own injury? Can he, in a word, be actuated in all these exertions for the public good, by the duty he owes to God, and the love he bears to his divine Master?—And at the same time not be a good man, a real Christian, a believer in the sense of the New Testament? It is impossible. Would we then enjoy the sweet satisfaction resulting from a humble hope, that we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and are the heirs of future happiness and glory? O then let us be persuaded, from the noblest motives, to look not on our own things only, but also on the things of others!

Thus have we held up to your view the duties of a public spirit, and endeavoured to allure you to the practice of them by every possible argument—arguments drawn from *the relation we stand in to one another—the express will of God* signified to us in various ways—*the frame and tenor of the gospel—the most illustrious examples*—and *our own truest interest.* Two or three reflections shall close the whole.

1. What sad cause have the best of us for deep humiliation before God! Ah! my brethren, we have all failed in the duties we owe one another, and in the fervour of that disinterested and generous temper which ought to have impelled us to them. Do we not look back with shame, regret, and sorrow upon the unprofitableness of our past lives? Are we not pained at our very hearts with the thought, that we have lived so much to ourselves, and so little to the good of others? Does it not grieve us to recollect the many fair opportunities we have missed of serving the interests of our fellow-creatures? And is it not afflicting to the last degree to reflect, that the flattering prospects of worldly ease, honour, and emolument, have too often impeded, if not wholly obstructed, our nobler pursuits? How numerous have been our defects and failings in every character we sustain, and in every station of life we fill? And how great are the aggravations of our guilt! Let us humble ourselves in the dust before God. And at the same time, let us not be unduly discouraged; but rather,

2. Rejoice that God of his mercy is disposed, for the sake of the generous interposition of his Son in our favour, to pardon all these our offences, and to accept and save us. How free and unmerited is the love of God! And how unspeakably great the condescension and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! To expiate the guilt of all those omissions we have been lamenting, he wept, and bled, and died. The tenderest offices of kindness he has rendered us, though we have been so parsimonious in our favours to others. The veil of charity he has thrown over our ingratitude, selfishness and baseness; and entitled us, who had no claim at all upon the bounty of Heaven, and little upon that of our fellow-creatures, to the noblest fruits of divine benevolence. O may we then be persuaded,

3. Henceforth to live not unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again! To look not on our own things, but every one of us on the things of others! The least return we can make to him for all his generosity to us, is to imitate the example he has set us, and to contribute all that lies in our power to the happiness of our fellow-immortals.

DISCOURSE II.

FAMILY RELIGION IN GENERAL.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.——*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

A MORE striking scene can scarcely be beheld, than that exhibited to our view in the history before us—Joshua, the servant of the Lord, and the successor of Moses, at the head of a numerous household, with a countenance which piety and age had made serene and venerable, publicly announcing his own personal regard to religion, and offering his example in the government of his family to the imitation of all the tribes of Israel.

The assembly was large: it consisted of the people in general, with their elders, heads, governors, and officers. They all felt the obligations they owed this great and good man, as their captain and leader, their ruler and judge; and were in a disposition, as the event shewed, to receive the instructions he should give them. He puts them in mind, therefore, what God had done for their forefathers and for them, the signal miracles he had wrought in their favour, the glorious victories which through his interposition they had obtained, and the happy fruits they had reaped from them. And he then with great earnestness and affection entreats them to fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, totally renouncing the idolatrous practices of the heathens. So he adds, in the verse of which our text is a part, *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell.*

The manner of his address is at once authoritative and persuasive. It is as if he had said, "If after you have duly weighed the facts which have been laid before you, and those of which you have been yourselves eye-witnesses, it should seem unreasonable, or any way prejudicial to your interest, to serve the Lord, *Jehovah*—the God that rescued you from the cruel yoke of Pharaoh, led you through the wilderness, and put you in possession of this fair and fruitful country; choose you this day whom ye will serve. Consider under whose protection ye will put yourselves, and whom it is most eligible to worship, whether the gods of your ancestors, Terah, Nahor, and others from whom your father Abraham sprung, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell, and who were utterly unable to defend their worshippers, or themselves, against the vengeance of Jehovah, the only living and true God." In such terms does he expose the great sin and folly of their becoming again idolaters, and at the same time teach them the infinite reasonableness and importance, not only of their professing the true religion, but of their acting therein upon the grounds of the most deliberate consideration and choice.

He then adds in the text, *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* As if he had said, "Whatever effect these my

reasonings and persuasions may have upon your minds, whether ye adhere to the true religion or renounce it, I am come to a point with myself upon the matter: it is my free, deliberate and firm resolution *to serve the Lord*, to avow Jehovah for my God in the face of the whole world, to render him the worship he has required, to aim at universal obedience to his commands, and to endeavour, to the utmost of my ability, to promote his interests among mankind. This was the resolution I formed in early life, to this resolution I have hitherto adhered, and, by the grace of God, I am determined to abide by it to the end of my days. Nor am I singular in this resolution: my family agree with me in it. They are all convinced it is both their duty and interest to serve the Lord. There is not a dissenting voice among them. And as to those of them who are not yet capable of discerning good and evil, I will train them up in the fear of God. By my authority I will restrain them from vice and sin, and oblige them to comply with the external forms of religion. By my counsels and instructions I will endeavour to fix salutary impressions upon their young and tender minds. By my example I will allure them to the practice of virtue and piety. And my incessant cries shall ascend to heaven for the blessing of God on these my well-meant exertions for their good. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

What a noble resolution was this, and how happily expressed! Never did Joshua appear to the eyes of the pious Israelites in a more venerable point of light than upon this occasion. His attitude, voice, countenance, and manner of address, we may be sure, all strongly marked his ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the tender feelings of his heart for their real good. Nor was the effect inconsiderable, which this last sermon of his produced on the minds of this large and solemn audience. The people answered and said, *God forbid, that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. We will serve the Lord, for he is our God* a.

And now the object we have in view, is to persuade you, Sirs, and ourselves, with great sincerity and cheerfulness to adopt the language of the text. And should we succeed, how glorious will be the consequence! You will be happy and

a Ver. 16, 18.

honourable in life, in death, and to all eternity. Yea, I will add,—a thought which cannot fail of inspiring every ingenuous mind with ardour—you will be the instruments of making multitudes around you happy also. Let us then consider more particularly,

First, The import of this resolution which every good man, who is master of a family, forms in regard of himself—*As for me, I will serve the Lord.* And,

Secondly, The influence which this resolution, rightly formed, will and ought to have upon his temper and conduct towards those under his care.—I will use my endeavours that, *my house* also *may serve the Lord.*

First, Let us consider the import of this resolution in regard of the master of a family himself.

What we here mean is, to give a clear and compendious account of *Personal-religion;* and the rather as this is the true and proper ground of *Family-religion.* For if he who presides over a house is himself an utter stranger to the fear of God, it is much to be apprehended that there will be little of it among those under his care. Our ideas we will class under two heads —What it is *to serve the Lord*—and *the principles* upon which every Christian man is disposed so to do.

I. As to *serving the Lord*, it is a phrase that comprehends in it the whole of our duty; the main branches of which are—the worship of God—the living a holy life—and the using our influence to promote the cause of religion in the world.

God is to be worshipped. This is the main idea meant to be conveyed in the text, as is evident from the occasion on which the words were spoken, namely, the propensity of the Israelites to idolatry. Joshua wished therefore to dissuade them from this great evil, and to engage them to the worship of the only living and true God. The modes of worship indeed under the present dispensation are different from those of the former, not tedious and expensive, but plain and simple. We are to offer prayer and praise to God, in his house, in our own houses, and in our retirements. We are to profess our faith in Christ, through whose mediation we look for pardon and eternal life, by a submission to the two institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper. And we are devoutly to attend the preaching of the

word on the stated seasons appointed for that purpose, and other opportunites that offer. This is serving God, in the first and direct sense of the phrase.—But we are serving him also, when we are conforming to the dictates of reason and conscience in the general course of our lives. Every act of justice, humanity, and benevolence we perform, in obedience to the will of God, is a service rendered to our Creator; and he mercifully acknowledges it as such. And every endeavour to subdue our irregular passions, and to cultivate the opposite virtues, comes under the same denomination. So that as the real Christian habitually aims to please God, he is continually serving him.—In a word, we are on some occasions more especially to use extraordinary efforts, for the noble purpose of promoting the cause of religion in the world. Eminent service some men have rendered their generation, by their faithful instructions, prudent counsels, vigorous defence of the truth, right application of their substance, and exemplary lives. By their spirited exertions, with the blessing of God, the kingdom of Satan hath been shaken to its very foundations, and the church of Christ acquired new splendour and glory. Vice hath fled before their sharp and unremitting rebukes into corners, and civil society itself received a large accession of honour, wealth, and happiness, through their services and sufferings.—This it is *to serve the Lord.* But what,

II. Are the principles upon which every real Christian serves God?

Here we are led into a view of all those reasonings and affections of the heart, which constitute what we call experimental religion. Deeply sensible of his past sins, and the miserable depravity of his nature, and well persuaded upon the divine testimony of the abounding mercy and love of God through Christ, the Christian feels himself disposed to all that service which has just been described. His reasonings on the great truths of religion are calm, sober, and deliberate: his approbation of the things that are excellent, free, cordial, and unreserved: and his resolution to adhere to God and his duty, in a dependance on superior assistance, firm and steady. Many a doubt has arisen in his mind upon the most interesting points of religion: many a struggle he has endured with pride, passion,

and unbelief; many a tear he has poured over his own frailty and weakness; many a fervent cry he has addressed to Heaven for the enlightening, renewing, and quickening influence of the blessed Spirit. And the result of the whole is, *As for me I will serve the Lord.* Let us listen a moment to the pious effusions of his heart upon the two grand principles which give existence to this resolution in his breast, *Duty* and *Interest.*

"It is my *Duty*," says he, "to serve God. He has an uncontrouled authority over me, and every imaginable claim of gratitude upon me. Can I hesitate a moment, whether he who made me, upholds me in life, and pours his providential bounty all around me, has a title to my reverence, confidence, love, and obedience? Can I view him pitying me amidst my aggravated guilt and misery, and sending his own Son, by his bloody passion and death, to redeem and save me? Can I recollect the measures he has taken to bring back a poor, lost, wandering sheep to his fold, the loud calls of his providence to my sleepy conscience, the earnest strivings of his Spirit with my perverse heart, the seasonable restraints of his grace, and the soothing consolations of his love? Can I traverse the paths through which he has led me, call up to view the dangers from which his hand has rescued me, and realise the glorious hopes his never-failing promises set before me? And not feel in my bosom the warmest emotions of love, gratitude, and obedience? O no! My God, at an expence which angels cannot compute, has served my interest; the foulest infamy therefore would fall on me, could I be so disingenuous as to decline his service.

But it is the idea of *Advantage*, as well as duty, that determines the Christian to adopt the resolution in the text. These two motives are here happily combined. No service has God required of us but it is our interest to render him. We are not obliged, therefore, in order to become Christians, to eradicate from our breasts a principle which is connatural to us. We may cherish it, and, provided it is held under the direction of a sound judgment, it will add force to obedience. Through the depravity of their hearts men do, indeed, form a mistaken notion of their interest. The pleasure they feel in the gratification of their inordinate desires, and the pain which they must consequently endure in the mortification of them, fix a deep prejudice

in their breasts against religion, as inimical to their happiness. And this prejudice is confirmed by the contempt in which religion is held by the generality of mankind, and the persecution to which it often exposes those who profess it. But when once men's minds are disabused of these prejudices, and religion is held up to their view in all her native beauty and excellence, they clearly perceive where their true interest lies, and that there is no small profit in serving the Lord.

Under the influence of these reasonings then, and feeling this first principle of human nature in all its force, the Christian cheerfully as well as dutifully resolves, "*As for me, I will serve the Lord.* I am sensible that the discipline of the heart is not to be maintained without many painful sensations, that the right discharge of duty will often require great exertions, and that a steady adherence to truth and conscience will sometimes draw after it obloquy and reproach. In this warfare I have many powerful enemies to struggle with. In this course I must put out all my strength. And through various causes I shall frequently endure great dejection of spirit. Yet to serve God, be the difficulties I have to contend with ever so numerous, is to serve myself. The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace *a*. In keeping his commandments there is great reward *b*. And godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come *c*. By avoiding temptation and sin I shall escape much anguish, which I must otherwise sooner or later suffer. Every advantage gained over my evil passions, will create real pleasure in my breast. Communion with God in the duties of religion will cheer and enliven my spirits. A persuasion that he hath forgiven my sins, and that I am interested in his favour, will make me sublimely happy. And a sincere endeavour to advance his glory, and to do good to my fellow-creatures, will be accompanied with refined satisfaction and delight. Whatever affliction I suffer in the course of my duty, it will turn to my advantage: and whatever opposition I meet with, it will heighten the glory of the victory. Christ is my Master, and he will not fail to assist, succeed, and reward me. He is my Captain, and through him I shall come off more than conqueror. He is my

a Prov. iii. 17. *b* Psal. xix. 11. *c* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Judge, and having finished my course he will put the crown upon my head, and say to me in the presence of angels and men, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord *a*. *As for me*, therefore, *I will serve the Lord*."—Such, in short, is the spirit and language of real religion.

Would to God we were all possessed of this inestimable blessing! Let us examine ourselves upon this matter. Are we the servants of God, or of Satan? the willing subjects of divine grace, or the miserable vassals of sin? What is our grand object—the enjoyment of the refined and exalted pleasures of religion—or the gratification of our irregular passions and desires? Have we devoted ourselves to God, or do we live without God, without Christ, and without hope, in the world? If the latter is our character, how tremendous is our state! We shall miss of real happiness in this life, and dying in our sins, suffer the wrath of God in the world to come. But if the former is our character, we have every imaginable reason to rejoice. Religion is the noblest cordial of human life, the best security against the evils of it, and the only preparative for a future happy state. Oh! let us be persuaded seriously to consider these things.

And permit me more especially to press the consideration of these matters upon young people. You, my friends, are just entering on life, just launching out into the world. Your voyage may be tempestuous: and in that case would you not wish to be prepared for the event? Would you not be glad to possess that which will calm your minds in adversity, elevate your hearts above the world, and enable you to outride the storm with magnanimity? Or if the reverse should be the case, would you not wish to be secured from the undue influence of the fascinating gales of prosperity? Life is short, its joys and sorrows are passing swiftly away. Is it not of infinite consequence that you safely reach the haven of everlasting rest and happiness? And what can avail you to that end short of an interest in the mediation of Christ, and a prevailing sense of religion in your hearts? Would you be esteemed by wise and good men? Would you be useful in your generation? Would you be composed and cheerful in your dying moments? Would you, in fine, be happy to all eternity? Oh! join issue with this man of God in our

a Matt. xxv. 21.

text. Adopt his resolution, and humbly depending on divine grace, say, with the same sincerity and firmness he said it, *As for me I will serve the Lord.* But we have other motives wherewith to urge you to the consideration of these interesting matters. You will soon, it is probable, have houses of your own: would you preside in them with dignity and comfort to yourselves, and with advantage to those whom Providence may entrust to your care? Your doing as Joshua did is necessary to that end.—And this leads us to the main object of this discourse, which is,

SECONDLY, To shew the influence which a due sense of religion will have upon the master of a family, to regulate his temper and conduct towards those under his care—He will use his endeavours that *his house*, as well as himself, *may serve the Lord.*

A *Family* is a little society, usually consisting of parents, children, and servants. This social connection is a plain dictate of nature, and hath uniformly subsisted in the world from the beginning of time, and all over the earth. It is the wise contrivance and appointment of Providence, for the general good of mankind. And in order rightly to understand the duties and privileges of the several members of this little community, we need only contemplate the relation they bear to each other. It shall suffice at present to speak of those which are peculiar to the master of a house. To him nature and the consent of all nations have delegated the care, protection, and government of the family, upon a presumption that affection will induce him to do the utmost in his power to promote their honour and happiness. The conjugal and parental ties are most intimate and endearing, and will therefore stimulate him to the noblest exertions in their favour. And his own interest, as well as considerations of friendship and equity, will dispose him to seek the good of those who voluntarily serve him. And surely it is fit that in him the government of the family should be vested, on whom the weight of its care and protection thus devolves. His sex, age, experience, and ability to provide for the welfare of the whole, entitle him to the supreme authority. And the prudent use of that authority, mingled with good-nature and parental fondness and love, will be likely to secure to him reverence and obedience.

Now the utility of religion to assist the master of a family in the discharge of all the duties he owes to those under his care, will clearly appear upon a little reflection. It will have a considerable influence in the management of his *temporal concerns*, in the success of which his family are deeply interested. To him they look up for their maintenance and protection, the necessaries and accommodations of life. And if prudence, integrity, frugality, and industry, are virtues which contribute largely, with the blessing of Providence, to worldly prosperity; it is easy to see that religion, which evidently teaches and inculcates them, must be of no small use to the head of a family in his worldly pursuits. And hence Solomon describes *Wisdom* as having *Length of days in her right hand: and in her left riches and honour a.* It will make a man honest, discreet, and diligent: or, if he at all fails in the two last particulars, it will not be owing to any defect in religion itself, but to his own folly. And then, that affection for their offspring, which strongly impels parents to the most vigorous exertions for the improvement of their worldly circumstances, receives additional strength and energy from a lively sense of religion. A good man feels the operation of this passion in its full force and extent: and however some worthless parents, by precipitating themselves into sensual indulgences, may have lost sight of the interests of their families; his religion will effectually secure him from thus *denying the faith, and becoming worse than an infidel b.* Yea, there have been instances of persons naturally slothful, who upon their conversion to the knowledge and love of religion, have become remarkably industrious: and their families, though no friends to serious godliness, have acknowledged the secular advantages they have derived from this extraordinary revolution in their characters.

But let us now view the Christian *presiding in his family*, and see how happily the fear of God assists him in the exercise of that authority with which nature has invested him. His object will be to make all under his care happy. But domestic happiness is not to be enjoyed where the master is churlish, morose, and severe. Set on the gratification of his peevish humours, and the making all about him submit obsequiously to

a Prov. iii. 16. b 1 Tim. v. 8.

his contemptible idea of despotic power, he may be feared, but he cannot be loved. These notions, and this kind of demeanour, which are the result of ignorance, vanity, and ill-nature, religion will not fail to correct. A Christian will value his authority, as a parent and a master, no further than as it is a means to promote the welfare of those entrusted to his care. And if on any occasion the resolute exertion of it becomes necessary, he will not forget to blend prudence, forbearance, and good-nature with it. That meekness, serenity, and joy, which the grace of God inspires, will, in proportion to their prevalence in his breast, infuse mildness, sweetness, and cheerfulness, into the whole of his deportment. And O! how pleasing the scene, to see him, under the influence of his religion, smiling on all around him, assisting with the soft language of conjugal affection the cares of the dear partner of his joys, embracing his young offspring in the arms of paternal fondness, taking a part with them in their innocent amusements, and contriving how to render the offices of those who serve him easy and beneficial to themselves! Is religion unfriendly to domestic happiness? No, it is most friendly to it. For the truth of this we appeal to the reason and nature of the thing itself, to the book of God, to history, and to what I doubt not your eyes must have beheld in many houses consecrated to virtue and religion. How much is it to be lamented that any who profess the name of Christ, should, by a contrary demeanour, induce a doubt in the breasts of others that such is its tendency!

But the happiness of a family depends not only upon the good nature and benevolence of those who preside, but on *the religious character* of those who compose it. This therefore is the grand object with that master who himself fears God. And to this idea our enlargement in this discourse will be chiefly directed. Here then let us view him, under a deep impression of the truth and importance of religion, exerting all his prudence, good-nature, and authority, to the purpose of conciliating the affections of every one under his roof to it. The duties which he will consider himself obliged to practise to this great end, may be comprised under the following heads—the *diligently watching the morals of his family*—the *carefully instructing them in the principles of religion*—the *regular maintenance of*

family devotion—the *obliging them to attend upon public worship*—and the *setting before them a holy and pious example.* But the consideration of these particulars must be referred to another opportunity.

PART II.

We have taken a view of personal religion, and proceeded to shew, secondly, the influence it will have upon the master of a family, to regulate his temper and conduct towards those under his care. "He will use his endeavours to engage *his house*, as well as himself, *to serve the Lord.*" Here, having spoken of the origin of families, and the wisdom and goodness of Providence, in the forming these important social connections; we have considered the utility of religion to assist the master of a family in the management of his *temporal concerns*, and in the exercise of that *domestic authority* with which nature has entrusted him. And now, since the happiness of a family principally depends upon their *religious character*, we proceed to consider the duties he will feel himself obliged to practise, in order to the promoting their best interests.

1. It is the duty of Heads of houses *to look well after the morals of their families.*

Men of reputable characters, though they may not have entered into the spirit of religion, feel the importance of this duty. Persuaded that vice brings after it shame, poverty, and wretchedness, they will not harbour it under their roof. Who in his senses would permit a dishonest servant to enter his house, or suffer his children, if he could prevent it, to waste his substance in riotous living? A regard, therefore, to their temporal interest will induce most people to preserve some kind of order in their families. But the restraints held over children and servants, which proceed merely from motives of worldly interest, are too often feeble and ineffectual. That domestic government which stands alone upon this principle, reaches not the true sources of those evils which are so generally dreaded. It is religion that lays the axe at the root of vice, and enables a master, feeling the force of it in his own heart, to take such measures as will effectually prevent, with the blessing of God, the seeds of immorality from growing up in his house, and spreading their noxious influence all around him.

With a jealous eye he will watch the first expressions of pride, passion, deceit, indolence, and other vices, in the countenances, language, and behaviour of his children and servants. These evils will not fail to meet his stern disapprobation and censure. Punishments he will inflict adequate to the nature and aggravation of the offence; at the same time labouring to fix upon the delinquent a deep sense of the greatness of the crime. *Chasten thy son while there is hope*, says Solomon, *and let not thy soul spare for his crying a.* And if, notwithstanding all his endeavours, the vicious temper is not to be restrained, but breaks out in open and repeated acts of iniquity, he will take some prudent and resolute measure to separate the infectious member from the rest of the society, and thereby prevent the spread of the fatal distemper. *He that worketh deceit*, says David, *shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight b.*—And on the other hand, the pious master of a family will use his utmost endeavours to cultivate the opposite virtues in his children and servants. He will often familiarly explain to them their nature and tendency, and pleasantly descant upon their excellence and utility. And the early expressions of these amiable qualities he will not fail to mark and applaud, rewarding them with smiles and caresses, and every token of approbation that prudence and good-nature can devise.

Such measures as these for the promoting good morals in our families, every considerate person must needs approve. But alas! what through parental indulgence, and what through sloth, they are miserably neglected by multitudes among us. Who then does not see the great importance, as well as the direct tendency of a lively sense of religion in the master of a family, to stimulate him to the right discharge of this branch of his duty? Can I, inspired with an utter detestation of vice, and an unconquerable attachment to virtue, forbear to exert all my powers to eradicate the seeds of the former from the bosoms of my dear offspring, and to cherish those of the latter there? Will not my religious feelings extort tears of anguish from my eyes, whilst I am administering the bitter, but wholesome, draught of correction to their perverseness? And will not the

a Prov. xix. 18. b Psal. ci. 7.

same feelings spread a cheerful pleasure over my countenance, whilst I am applauding their flexibility and filial obedience? Having the command of the great God, and their temporal and everlasting interests in full view before my eyes, these duties will not be neglected through false-fondness, nor abused by undue severity.

2. Another office we owe to our families is, the *carefully instructing them in the principles of religion.*

There is not a plainer dictate of nature than this: and yet how shamefully this duty is neglected you need not be told. The cause of this great evil is in general, the want of a due sense of religion in those of whom this service is required. And, as men are never at a loss to find an excuse for omitting what they are not disposed to do, so in this case we shall hear some object, that the catechising children is the way to prejudice them unduly in favour of particular opinions, and so to disqualify them for future free enquiry. And others we shall hear—strange to think it!—gravely insinuating, that the adopting this measure with children, is taking God's work out of his hand, and is therefore an affront to him, and nugatory in itself. The futility and indeed impiety of these objections may be easily made appear. But as we shall have a more proper opportunity hereafter to discuss these questions *a*, it shall suffice at present in a few words to explain the duty, and shew how forcibly a prevailing sense of religion will impel a Christian man to it.

The leading truths of natural and revealed religion, I mean such as are intimately connected with experience and practice, every Christian understands, and therefore ought to inculcate them upon those under his care. His instructions should be adapted to their age and abilities. He should begin with first principles, and so proceed to those that follow, taking the Scriptures for his guide, and calling in to his aid such explanations of them as he judges most conformable to the truth. His meaning he should endeavour to convey by easy and familiar language, and to illustrate it by apt and natural similies. He should not only require them to answer questions put to them from their memory, but take pains to fix the sense of both ques-

a See Disc. V.

tions and answers upon their understandings. The grounds and reasons of each truth he should lay open to their view, represent their importance with all the earnestness of parental affection, examine them frequently upon the progress they make, and add fervent prayer to his instructions and counsels. There is a way of insinuating knowledge to the minds of young people, which hath often had a wonderful effect. Much depends, with the blessing of God, upon our conciliating their affections to us, convincing them that we mean their good, carefully avoiding the making religion a task, not over-burdening their memories, and properly rewarding their diligence and attention.

These measures surely every one's sober reason and understanding must approve. They were such as Abraham used with his family. *I know him*, says God, *that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him* a. And they were such as his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice used with Timothy, of whom the apostle tells us, that *from a child he had known the holy scriptures* b. And what man, whose heart burns with love to God, and whose bowels yearn towards his children, but will feel himself obliged to copy after the example of these excellent people? Can I believe there is a God, and that my happiness depends upon his favour, and not wish to impress these sentiments upon my children whom I consider as parts of myself? Can I be deeply sensible of the guilt and depravity of human nature, and not endeavour to awaken a conviction thereof in their consciences? Can I see clearly my own need of such a Saviour as Christ, and not hold him up to their view, in every light that may attract their hearts and affections to him? Can I be persuaded of the infinite pleasure which the experience and practice of religion afford, and not from the bottom of my soul wish that they may largely participate of that divine pleasure? Can I, in fine, believe there is such a place as heaven, and not long, and pray, and use my utmost endeavours to bring my children, friends, and servants thither also? O! no. Religion is not a mere speculation: it

a Gen. xviii. 19. b 2 Tim. i. 5. and iii. 15.

is an operative principle, and these fruits of it are a noble evidence of its existence and prevalence in our hearts.

3. The *regular maintenance of family worship*, is the next duty to be considered.

We shall not here enter particularly into our obligations to this duty—that will be attempted hereafter *a*: but only, following the line we have already pursued, describe it, and shew the influence of religion to qualify us for the right discharge of it. —By *Family-Worship* we mean the assembling our children and servants together, at convenient seasons, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures, and offering prayer and praise to God. The master of every family ought to be king and priest in his own house. It is his province to determine the proper time for these solemn and pleasing exercises, and the manner in which they should be conducted. The several members of this little community being gathered together, a portion of Scripture should be distinctly read; this followed, if the situation and circumstances of the family will admit, with a song of praise to God; and then the master, or some other person properly qualified, should devoutly present the supplications of the whole house to Heaven.

Certain prudential rules it may not be improper here to lay down, submitting them to the judgment and piety of those who preside in families.—The morning and the evening seem each a fit season for this social exercise. That time, however, should be chosen which may best conduce to the right discharge of the duty: not a late hour of the morning, for that will clash with the hurries of business; nor a late hour at night, for that will indispose persons to serious attention.—The service, for obvious reasons, should not be protracted to an undue length; the whole may perhaps be comprehended within about a quarter of an hour.—Every one in the house should consider it as his duty to attend.—The Scriptures should be read in regular order, that so their connection may be understood, and the whole in a course of time gone through.—A particular attention should be paid to the circumstances of the family in the prayers addressed to God.—And as variety and brevity should be aimed at, to prevent tediousness, so formality should be carefully guarded

a Disc. III.

against, that being an evil which too often attends the frequent returns of these periodical exercises.

Family-worship thus conducted, with a due regard to the important ends of it, must, I think, strike every good man as a most reasonable and pleasing service. The Scriptures authorise it, and many intimations occur therein to direct us in some of the circumstances that relate to it. But these I forbear to mention here, as also to combat the discouragements some pious minds labour under respecting the right discharge of this duty; it being our intention more particularly to consider these matters in the next discourse. How strange this duty should be neglected! Yet so it is in too many families. And in most instances to what is the total neglect of it owing but a want of religion? Nor is it indeed to be wondered, that they who have no sense of their dependance on divine Providence, and no taste for the exalted pleasures of devotion, should account a service returning so frequently upon them, tedious and unprofitable.

But it is to those masters of families who have religion at heart, that we mean here to address ourselves. You, Sirs, feel your obligations to him that made you, preserves you, and saves you. It was his providence that led you into this social connection, gave you the partner of your cares and joys, and blessed you with the hopeful offspring, which like olive plants surround your table. He pitched your tent for you, he commanded you to erect an altar to him. And can you find it in your hearts to refuse obedience to his command? or to decline a service in which you have already found your account? Think how great the pleasure the good man sometimes feels, whilst officiating at the head of his family in this little temple consecrated to Heaven! Recollecting the many undeserved favours he has received, how gratefully does he acknowledge them! Calling to mind his own and their sins, how penitently does he confess them! Feeling the most anxious concern for their best interests, how earnestly does he request not only temporal but spiritual blessings! Viewing the blessed God in the character of an indulgent parent, how passionately does he commend them to his protection and love? And, amidst the various vicissitudes of life, trusting under the shadow of his wings, with what exultation of heart

does he sometimes cry out, *O God, how excellent is thy loving-kindness a!*

Can such a scene as this be contemplated, and any heart among us, in which parental affection and genuine piety are united, remain indisposed to this duty? Be persuaded then, O! be persuaded, Sirs, to fall in with the dictates of conscience, and the command of the blessed God. Say with Joshua, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* In this little congregation the great God will not disdain to dwell. *He loves the gates of Zion, and he loves the dwellings of Jacob too b.* Who knows but divine life may be communicated, as well as cherished and maintained, within your consecrated walls? Who knows but it may be said of this and that child, of this and that servant, and of this and that friend who sojourns with you—said of him in the noblest sense of the expression—*He was born there c?*

4. The next duty to be considered, is the *obliging our families to attend regularly on the public worship of God.*

By *Public-Worship* we mean the offering homage to God in a larger circle than that of our own families. Many families are to assemble together, at stated seasons, in one place, for this purpose. This practice, under various forms, hath obtained from the beginning over almost all the earth. It is the dictate of nature, and the express appointment of Scripture. The service required under the Mosaic dispensation consisted of numerous rites which are now most of them abolished. Under the present, all that is expected of us in this social connection is, that we present our joint prayers and praises to God; that some one duly qualified for the important office, explain and enforce the great truths and duties of religion to us; and that those who truly fear God profess their faith in Christ, and their love to him, by the celebration of the two institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper.

Now as every pious man will feel himself obliged to pay a due regard to public worship, so they who have families must be sensible it is their duty to oblige their children and servants to attend regularly upon it. At an early hour the master of a house, at the head of those under his care, should appear in his proper place. The affairs of his family should be so adjusted,

a Psal. xxxvi. 7. b Psal. lxxxvii. 2. c Psal. lxxxvii. 6.

as that not one member of it, except necessity require, be absent. A passion for novelty, which may induce any of them to wander about to various places of worship, should be checked. His eye should properly watch their demeanour during divine service, that it be serious and attentive. At the close of the two stated services the whole family should retire to their own home. Visits, except where offices of mercy are required, should be interdicted, and all social intercourses for the purpose of mere amusement avoided. Opportunity should be given every one to recollect seriously by himself what he has been about. And a suitable exercise in the evening, wherein the younger part of the family may have an opportunity of giving an account of what they have heard, and serious impressions may be made on the minds of all, will happily and usefully close the day. Religion, I am sensible, should not be made a burden: and young minds especially should not be held too long to one subject. As therefore two public services in the day will be sufficient, so prudence will teach the master of a family to direct his discourse in the intervals of worship, and to diversify the evening exercise in such a manner, as that, with the agreeable refreshments nature has provided, no one may have cause to say that this is the most unpleasant day in the week.

And now let me ask the masters of families, whether if they were to pursue this line of conduct, they might not hope, with the blessing of God, to see virtue and religion flourish in their houses? Sure I am such masters as are Christians indeed, persuaded that the public preaching of the gospel is the appointment of Heaven for the salvation of men, will not, cannot, be easy while any under their influence deprive themselves of the opportunity of hearing it. Besides, it is an affront to the good sense and authority of him who presides in a family, for any one of the members of it to turn his back contemptuously upon what *he* believes the great God hath required. As to the young they will be easily led to their duty by the gentle hand of parental affection. And if any one just entering on life can, without the least pretence of reason, perversely oppose the will of a father in so interesting a concern as this, his natural temper and his principles must be horrid indeed. But it is not to

such depraved young people we are here addressing ourselves: it is to you, Sirs, to whose hands nature hath entrusted the power, and whose hearts divine grace hath inspired with a disposition, to contribute somewhat at least to the present and everlasting welfare of your children and servants. And how can you better contribute to this great object, than by using every means in your power, to make it agreeable to them to join you in the public worship of that God, on whose favour their as well as your happiness depends? The prudent and steady discharge of your duty in this respect, is a dictate both of good sense and of piety. It will do you honour in the view of all wise and good men, it will be highly pleasing to God, and no doubt they, in the great day of account, having reaped the benefit of this proper exertion of your paternal authority, will with infinite joy call you blessed.—It now remains to consider,

5. And lastly, the obligations which masters are under *to set before their families holy and pious examples.*

Although the duties just recommended were discharged, in regard of the external expressions of them, with the greatest punctuality, yet their ends would in all probability be defeated, if the heads of families were wholly inattentive to their own tempers and conduct. What salutary effect will the best lessons of morality, enforced with the most vigorous discipline, produce, if they who give them do not themselves practise them? Our children and servants will keep a watchful eye on our manners, and if they can convict us of pride, passion, deceit, intemperance, and the like vices, they will instantly conclude that the severe hand we hold over them, does not proceed from any motive of good will to them, but from a wish to enslave them to our humours. Zeal for certain principles in religion, they will, in such case, set down to the account of narrowness, bigotry, and hypocrisy. The religious order observed in the family they will consider as a mere form, the effect of education and custom. And the duties of public worship itself, which we oblige them to attend upon, they will treat with indifference if not contempt. But such wretchedly inconsistent characters as these, are, I hope, rarely to be met with. There is truth in religion. And if the account we have given of it in the former part of this discourse

be just, as it will impel those masters of families who really possess it to the observance of the duties we have been recommending, so it will infallibly secure them from those gross evils which tend to defeat their effect.

Here permit me to hold up to your view the temper and conduct of a Joshua, who, as he spake the language of the text with unfeigned fervour and sincerity, so, we may be bold to affirm, walked within his house with a perfect heart. The vices which were sternly forbidden in his children and servants, were first driven with detestation from his own breast. And while in familiar and expressive language he recommended to them the duties of truth, integrity, modesty, meekness, and benevolence; the native beauty of these virtues was still more strikingly exhibited to their view in his own countenance and actions. The truths of revealed religion which he taught them, were the genuine sentiments of his own heart: and while his doctrine dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew, he felt the influence of those divine hopes which the promise made to the fathers of the Messiah was adapted to produce. Deeply impressed himself with the greatness and goodness of God, he daily offered the prayers and praises of his family to Heaven, with a fervour and affection that could scarce fail to excite and enflame their devotion. At the stated seasons he led up his numerous household to the tabernacle at Shiloh, and there, on the altar Moses had erected, presented the sacrifices to Jehovah the God of Israel which he had required at his hands. His venerable appearance, and the unaffected simplicity and ardour with which he assisted at these exercises, added solemnity to them, and begat a reverence in the breasts of all around him for these divine institutions. And when he withdrew from the house of God to his own habitation, the cheerfulness which appeared on his countenance, and the benevolence which mingled itself with all his domestic behaviour, attached every heart under his roof to him, and excited a noble emulation among them which should best imitate the example their master set them.—And now if such were our tempers and conduct in the families over which we preside, there would be light in all our dwellings, and joy in every heart there: our houses would be schools of virtue, temples of devotion, and nurseries for heaven.

Thus have we seen in what manner that master of a family, who has himself on right principles resolved to serve the Lord, ought to regulate his conduct towards those whom Providence hath entrusted to his care. It is his duty—*diligently to watch the morals of his children and servants—carefully to instruct them in the principles of religion—regularly to maintain family devotion—to oblige them to attend on public worship*—and *to set before them a holy and pious example.*—To close what has been said,

1. We see the true reason why there is so little family-religion in the world.

It is because masters of families do, in general, pay so little attention to religion themselves. Is it imaginable that he who has entered into the genuine spirit of Christianity, and under the influence of those divine principles daily aims to please and serve God, can be totally insensible of his obligations to promote the best interests of those he dearly loves, and who look up to him for protection and support? It cannot be. The miserable neglect therefore of the duties we have been recommending, in too many houses among us, forces upon us the painful suspicion of the want of personal religion in those who preside over them. Every effort, therefore, should be used by those who fear God, both ministers and people, to diffuse the knowledge and savour of religion among their friends, neighbours, and acquaintance. He who best succeeds in this attempt does the most essential service to the community. Let us then, Christians, animated by the love of our heavenly Father to us the children of his family, set our hands and hearts to this great work. Let us, by our instructions, influence, and example, preach the gospel of our divine Master to all around us, intreat and beseech men to become his disciples, and pour out our fervent cries at the throne of grace for an effectual blessing on our endeavours. Nor should we forget here to press it earnestly upon those who are just entering on life, to consider well the state of their own souls towards God, and to consecrate the houses in which they mean to dwell to his service, on whose favour their temporal and everlasting happiness depends. Erect an altar, Sirs, to God under the tent he has pitched. Dare not adopt any worldly schemes, or enter into any domestic connection without first

consulting him. Having him for your friend all will be well: his arm will protect you from every danger, and his hand pour upon you every needful good thing.

2. How great is the condescension and goodness of the ever-blessed God, in deigning to dwell under our humble roofs!

Will he indeed, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, take up his abode with men? What heart among us but glows with gratitude and love at these joyful tidings! Let us, my brethren, at the head of our several families, in a transport of devout affection, welcome this kind and generous guest into our houses. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors of the heart, and the King of Glory shall come in* a. Let us give him the entertainment he demands, even that of cordial love and unreserved obedience. Let us present him the sacrifices he requires, even those of daily prayer and praise; remembering what he himself hath graciously said, *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God* b. And let us tremble at the thought of so demeaning ourselves in the habitations he has thus honoured, as ever to provoke him to depart thence.

3. And lastly. If the presence of God with his people here renders their dwellings so light, secure, and happy; how glorious must that house be which he has prepared for their reception above!

It has often been observed that an habitation wherein virtue, friendship, and piety reign, is a lively emblem of the heavenly state. But the latter infinitely excels the former. That house on earth which is most devoted to God, has yet more or less of imperfection, sorrow, and sin in it. But these evils are held at an eternal distance from those bright mansions, in which our heavenly Father resides above. There, in due time, his whole family whom he hath redeemed with the blood of his Son, will be assembled together. The most perfect knowledge, purity, and love, shall prevail among them. His presence, without an intervening cloud, shall gladden all their hearts. And, in the character of kings and priests, they shall be employed in acts of the most exalted and rapturous devotion to him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, for evermore.

a Psal. xxiv. 4. b Psal. l. 23.

DISCOURSE III.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

ROM. XVI. 5.—*Likewise greet the church that is in their house.*

WE have laid before you, in the former Discourse, the duties of *Family-Religion in general:* that of *Family-Worship* merits a more particular discussion. To this purpose we have chosen the words just read, as the mode of language the apostle here uses will very naturally lead us into a pleasing view of this subject.

Indeed it is not absolutely certain that the little assembly here spoken of, is to be understood restrictively of the family of Priscilla and Aquila, as possibly other persons might occasionally meet with them in their house for religious worship. But that the whole Christian church at Rome are intended is unlikely: and it is the more so, as a great number of persons are mentioned in the following verses who belonged to other households. And it is remarkable that in an epistle written from Ephesus to Corinth, the apostle having addressed the salutations of these same persons (who happened at that time to be at Ephesus) and of *the church in their house*, he immediately adds, *All the brethren greet you* [a]. From whence it should seem natural to conclude, that the family (or church in the house) of Aquila and Priscilla, and the church of Ephesus, are clearly distinguishable from each other [b]. But I do not mean to lay the stress of the argument respecting our obligations to Family-Worship on the words of the text, or on passages of a similar nature. Other evidence we have to adduce. Yet, as the text

[a] 1 Cor. xvi. 19, 20.

[b] That the first epistle to the Corinthians was written, not from Philippi (as is said in the note added to the epistle in our Bibles) but from Ephesus, Dr. Whitby has, I think, clearly shewn in the preface to his commentary on that epistle.

will admit of the sense we have given it, we may be allowed to accommodate it to the purpose we have in view *a*.

Aquila and Priscilla, to whose family we consider the salutation in our text directed, were originally Jews, born in Pontus, and by occupation tent-makers. It is very probable from several circumstances, which we shall not stay to mention, that they were people of considerable wealth. Where, and by what means they were converted to the Christian faith we are not told. But it is evident, from the reception the apostle met with in their house at Corinth, and Apollos afterwards at Ephesus, from the attention they paid to the latter, *whom it is said, they took unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly b*, and particularly from the honourable mention made of them in this context, and in the Corinthians, that they were persons of distinguished characters for knowledge, benevolence, and piety. The apostle tells us, in the verses preceding the text, that *they were his helpers in Christ Jesus; that they had for his life laid down their own necks; and that to them not only he gave thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.* What led them first to Rome is not certain: but it seems they left that place, upon the edict published by the emperor Claudius for banishing the Jews from that city, and came to Corinth, a city of Greece *c*. From thence they removed to Ephesus, where they resided when the apostle writ his first epistle to the Corinthians, in which he transmits their salutations to that church, describing their family by the same terms as in our text. And

a Wolfius, in his *Curæ Philologicæ*, observes on this passage, "Sunt qui existimant, per Ecclesiam, quæ ad domum hujus vel illius esse dicitur, intelligi tantum familiam domesticam numerosiorem. Theophylactus: ουτως ησαν ουτοι ενδοξιμοι, ωστε τον οικον αυτων παντα ποιησαι πιστους· ουτως γαρ εκκλησιαν ονομαζει. Similiter alii patres apud Suicerum, Tomo I. Thesauri p. 1051. Vitringa tamen hic intelligere mavult fideles, qui ad ædes membri Ecclesiæ nobilioris soliti sint congregari. Hæc enim expositio maxime satisficere videtur significationi receptæ vocis εκκλησια sicut præterea constat, primos fideles in ædibus privatorum Ecclesiæ membrorum conventus suos agere consuevisse. Ita Act ii. 46. cap. v. 42. Cumque privati unius ædes non caperent tantam hominum multitudinem, quanta Ecclesiam Hierosolymitanam constituebat, non potuit non fieri quin plures ad hoc institutum destinarentur." But Dr. Whitby seems clearly of opinion, that where a whole family was converted to the Christian faith, such family was called a church. See his notes on the text, and on 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

b Acts xviii. 26. *c* Acts xviii. 1, 2.

afterwards they returned to Rome, for at that place it seems they were when the apostle sent this epistle to the Romans, which was written from Corinth, and after both the epistles to the Corinthians.

Such being the character of these excellent people, it cannot be doubted but they paid a due attention to domestic duties in general, and especially to that of family-worship. As their household is called a church, so we may be sure order, harmony, and devotion, the three main ideas in the description of a Christian church, prevailed therein. Assisted therefore by these hints, it will be no difficult matter, with a little scope allowed to imagination, to draw from these originals a pleasing picture of family virtue and piety.

A cordial affection subsisted between this happy pair. Aquila attended diligently to his temporal affairs, and, by the smiles of Providence on his honest labours, was enabled to live in a generous and hospitable manner. He who had built many a tent for others, had no doubt a decent one to reside in himself. Priscilla too, like the virtuous woman of whom Solomon speaks, *looked well to the ways of her household, and eat not the bread of idleness: so that her children arose up, and called her blessed; and her husband also praised her a.* By her prudent management, plenty, harmony, and cheerfulness, reigned through the house. Nor was she so taken up with her civil concerns as to have no leisure for instructing her offspring, and counselling her servants in matters relative to their best interests. As she understood the way of God herself, so she was used *to open her mouth to them with wisdom, and in her tongue was the law of kindness b.* Every thing was conducted with regularity and decorum. Each one in the family had his proper department, and each contributed his share to the happiness of the whole. They who presided exercised their authority with such prudence and gentleness, as failed not to secure to them suitable returns of reverence and affection. And they who were in subjection, both children and servants, looked up with such duty and attention to their superiors, as drew from them every imaginable expression of tenderness and love. They all behaved in so cordial and friendly a manner towards one another, that their neigh-

a Prov. xxxi. 27, 28. b Prov. xxxi. 26.

bours could scarce avoid saying, *How good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity a.*

To this virtuous and pious house all the friends of God and religion were welcome. Strangers were here hospitably received, and ministers affectionately entertained. How happy were they when they had a Paul and an Apollos with them! a Paul, for whom they had hazarded their lives; and an Apollos, whose eloquence and fervour not a little pleased and edified them. With such guests they were used to discourse largely of the things of God. And such was the improvement which the two venerable heads of this family made in divine knowledge, that they were capable of expounding the ways of God to those who were the teachers of others.

And, no doubt, at the stated seasons, family worship was performed with great reverence and devotion. Priscilla so disposed the affairs of the house as that all might attend. Her husband, or some other person present, read a portion of Scripture, and very probably expounded it. They then, it is likely, having been so instructed to do by the apostle, *taught and admonished one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord b.* And to these exercises was added fervent prayer to God. What solemn, improving, and delightful services were these! *Greet the church*, says the apostle, *that is in their house.* As if he had said, "I recollect the having often assisted at the worship observed in that pious house. With what pleasure have I behold the whole family assembled together morning and evening for that purpose! the cheerfulness mingled with seriousness that appeared on every countenance! the earnest attention with which they all listened to divine instructions! the sweet harmony and unaffected fervency with which their praises and prayers ascended to Heaven! and the happy effects which this pleasant and edifying exercise produced in their daily tempers and conduct! It was a little heaven upon earth. Make my most affectionate salutations to them. Tell them I am present in spirit though not in person with them. May they go on and prosper! And may the smiles of that God to whom they have consecrated their house, be enjoyed by every one in it!"

a Psal. cxxxiii. 1. b Col. iii. 16.

And now, in order to persuade you to the discharge of this duty, of which we have so happy an example before us, we will,

First, Establish this general proposition, that it is the duty of every family, in their own separate habitation, to offer daily prayer and praise to God:

Secondly, Lay down certain rules for the conducting such service, the fitness of which we shall deduce from considerations of reason and prudence, and from intimations thrown out in various parts of Scripture: and then,

Thirdly, Obviate the principal difficulties that may discourage persons from an attention to it.

First, We are to prove in general, that it is the duty of every family, in their own separate habitation, to offer daily prayer and praise to God.

The proposition, you see, we have laid down in general terms, sensible that there are many circumstances relative to this duty, which will not apply alike to all cases, and which therefore we mean to discuss under the next head. A family usually consists of parents, children, and servants: but in this term we comprehend all who happen to reside in one house, or apartment, be they more or less numerous. Now we affirm, that it is the incumbent duty of every such family to assemble together, daily, under their own roof, to worship the supreme God, that is, to acknowledge their dependance upon him, to offer praise to him for the mercies they have received, and to implore such temporal and spiritual blessings as they stand in need of.—This is *a plain dictate of nature*—it *hath been generally acknowledged* to be so—*evident traces we have of the practice in Scripture history*—it *is there enjoined upon us*—and *many great advantages do result from it.*

1. Family Worship is a *plain dictate of nature.*

Whoever believes there is a God, must admit that he ought to be worshipped. This is the duty of every individual: for if God is a Being possessed of all possible perfection; if we owe our existence, preservation, and happiness to his favour; and if he has made us reasonable creatures, capable of contemplating his infinite excellencies, and our own constant dependance on him and obligations to him; it is certainly most fit and right that we pay devout homage to him. No intelligent being can

be exempt from this duty. But man was made for society: and as social connections are of divine appointment, it is a dictate of nature that God should be worshipped in such connections; and the rather, as the uniting in these delightful and improving exercises, hath a happy effect to excite and promote the genuine spirit of devotion. Now family connections are the first and most important ones in society. They are founded in the law of nature, as is evident from God's having created man male and female, from the institution of marriage, and the various relations that result thence. Mankind, therefore, have subsisted in this form from the beginning, and all over the earth. They are thus united by the strongest bands of affection and interest, the principal pleasures of life arise out of these connections, and from thence, too, originate all other societies both civil and religious. Can it then be doubted that it is the will of God, the great Parent of the universe, that his numerous offspring, thus distributed into an infinite number of little societies, should each in their own separate habitations offer daily prayer and praise to him?

2. This idea *has generally prevailed in the world.*

The Greeks and Romans had their Penates and their Lares, that is, their household gods, which they kept with great attention and respect in an inner room of their houses, or perhaps some kind of Sacellum or little chapel consecrated for that purpose. And these tutelar deities they worshipped, both statedly and occasionally, with no small homage and ceremony *a*. Nor can it be doubted that similar practices obtained in other coun-

a The Penates and Lares are distinguishable from each other. The former were images of the gods, such as Juno, Minerva, &c. And the latter seem to have been representations of their ancestors, who were supposed after their decease to be attentive to the interests of their families.—As to the kind of worship that was paid them, we have many intimations in the Greek and Roman poets, &c. When Dido entertains Æneas, among other ceremonies, incense is offered to the Penates.

"Quinquaginta intus famulæ, quibus ordine longo
"Cura penum struere, et flammis adolere Penates."
ÆNEID. 7. 707. 8.

And Terence, in his *Phormio*, brings in Demipho as saying,

"————at ego
"Deos Penates hinc salutatem domum
"Divortar:————" PHORM. Act I. Sc. V. 80.

tries, and in very early times. This is evident from the story of Rachel, who, when she left the house of her father Laban the Syrian, carried away his household gods with her *a*; as also from that of Micah, so particularly related in the book of Judges *b*. With respect to the latter, he had not only his graven image, ephod, teraphim, and molten image, but a young man, a Levite, for his priest. And when the Danites took away from him these his household gods, they persuaded the priest to go with them, telling him it would be more for his advantage to be priest to a tribe than to the house of one man. It is admitted, indeed, that these people were idolaters, and had wretchedly mutilated and depraved the true religion; yet it is clear from the facts just related, that they held it as their indispensable duty not only to worship God publicly, but also in their own separate habitations.

3. We have *many instances in Scripture* of good men who paid a serious regard to this duty.

The honourable testimony which God was pleased himself to give to the piety of Abraham, *that he knew him, that he would command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment c*; puts it beyond a reasonable doubt, that religious worship was regularly observed in his family. The altars which Isaac and Jacob erected in Beersheba and Bethel, where they pitched their tents, and called upon the name of the Lord, were striking monuments of their devout attention to this duty *d*. The patriarch Job, anxious for the welfare of his family, is said to have *sanctified his children, rising up early in the morning, and offering burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: and this he did continually e*. The pious resolution which Joshua formed, and in which his family united with him, evidently includes the idea of religious worship in it; *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord f*. When David had brought up the ark of the Lord from the house of Obededom to the tabernacle he had pitched for it, *he returned*, it is said, *to bless his household g*. And, as *he walked within his house with a perfect heart h, even-*

a Gen. xxxi. 30. *b* Judg. xvii, xviii. *c* Gen. xviii. 19.
d Gen. xxvi. 25. xxxv. 6, 7, 14, 15. *e* Job i. 5.
f Josh. xxiv. 15. *g* 2 Sam. vi. 20. *h* Psal. ci. 2.

ing, morning, and at noon, prayed, and cried aloud a, and *seven times a day offered praise to God b*; so no doubt his family joined him in some at least of these devout exercises. Daniel prayed, and gave thanks unto God in his house at stated seasons: and, as he was known so to do, and this became an occasion of the edict his enemies procured against him, it is reasonable to conclude he was used to pray not in private only, but in the presence of his household *c*. In short, from many circumstances too numerous to be mentioned, it may, I think, be fairly inferred that this was a common practice among the pious Israelites.

In the New Testament we find *our Lord* frequently praying with the apostles, whom he considered as his family. The house of his friend Lazarus, which he so often visited, and where Mary was used to sit at his feet with such devotion to hear his word, no doubt resounded daily with the voice of prayer and praise. Nor can we think of the fellowship there was among the *primitive Christians* in their several houses at Jerusalem *d*; of the fervent prayers that were pouring out to God in the house of Mary the mother of John, when Peter delivered by an angel from prison, stood knocking at the door *e*; of the households of Lydia, and the Jailor at Philippi, where Paul and Silas were entertained and spake the word of the Lord *f*; and of the families of Nymphas *g*, and Philemon *h*, which are described in the same manner as that of Aquila and Priscilla in the text; without concluding that the duties of social worship were daily practised in them. But there is one striking instance we must not forget to mention, and that is of Cornelius, *who as he feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, so prayed to God alway*, that is, at all proper seasons: and was actually *praying in his house*, that is, with his domestics (as the word often signifies) when an angel was sent to him from God *i*.—And now from these examples we go on to mention,

4. Certain *admonitions* which may with good reason be considered as *enjoining this duty upon us.*

a Psal. lv. 17. *b* Psal. cxix. 164. *c* Dan. vi. 10.
d Acts ii. 42, 46. *e* Acts xii. 12. *f* Acts xvi. 15, 32.
g Col. iv. 16. *h* Philem. ver. 2. *i* Acts x. 2, 30.

Family worship consists of *prayer*, *praise*, and *instruction*.—As to the first of these, we are commanded to *pray always with all prayer and supplication* a. And can it be doubted that family prayer, a duty so consonant with the dictates of nature and reason, is included in this precept? When the apostle had been exhorting the several members which compose Christian families, such as parents, children, and servants, to the duties they owe each other, he immediately adds, *continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving* b. As if he had said, *Pray earnestly to God from day to day in your several families, for grace to enable you to fulfil the duties resulting from your relation to one another. And be thankful to your Father who is in heaven for all the domestic happiness you enjoy.*—As to *praise*, he exhorts the Colossians, in the same epistle, to *teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs* c: a mode of expression which may as properly be understood to refer to family, as to more public connections; for *the voice of rejoicing and salvation*, the psalmist tells us, *is in the tabernacles of the righteous* d.—And then, as to the duty of *reading the Scriptures*, and instructing our children and servants; it would be endless to repeat the many exhortations of this kind which occur in the bible. They may, however, all of them be comprehended in that of Moses to the heads of families among the Israelites; *These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house* e.—And now, if God has declared that *he loves the dwellings of Jacob* f; that, when he shall pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a spirit of grace and supplication, *every family shall mourn apart* g; and that in that day 'he will create a glory upon every dwelling place of mount Zion h:' and if, on the contrary, he has threatened that 'he will pour out his fury upon the heathen that know him not, and upon the families that call not upon his name i;' it can, methinks, no longer remain a question that it is our indispensable duty, in our several habitations, to offer prayer and praise to God.

a Eph. vi. 18. b Col. iv. 2. c Col. iii. 16.
d Psal. cxviii. 15. e Deut. vi. 6, 7. f Psal. lxxxvii. 2.
g Zech. xii. 10, 12. h Isa. iv. 5. i Jer. x. 25.

It will be said, perhaps, Where is there a direct positive command, requiring families to assemble together, morning and evening, to worship God in their own proper houses? I answer: the exact time is left to every one's prudence to determine: that therefore is not a part of the present question. But as to family worship in general, it being a plain dictate of nature, it was rather to be expected that it should be frequently adverted to in Scripture as an acknowledged duty, than held up to view in a distinct abstract proposition. It is, you have seen, manifestly included in general precepts, and clearly deducible from an infinite variety of circumstances which it would be endless to disseminate. Can any master of a family then lay his hand upon his heart and say, he verily believes God has required no such duty of him?—But to all that has been said we must add,

5. And lastly, *the great utility of family-worship.*

This is an argument addressed to interest, a passion that prevails in every human breast. If therefore it shall be found on sober reflection that the temporal prosperity of a family, its morals, piety, and social happiness, are all affected and promoted by the proper discharge of this duty; surely nothing but a criminal disaffection to religion will account for that shameful neglect of it which so much prevails in this country.

What man is there who does not wish to dwell securely in his habitation, to have his table daily spread with wholesome and pleasant food, and to see smiling health blooming in the countenances of all around him? The enjoyment of these blessings, be our prudence, industry, and economy what they may, depends on the favour of indulgent Providence. Regard therefore to that Providence is a plain dictate of nature, and a lively expression of it in our family connection cannot but be pleasing to God. How then can we expect that the Shepherd of Israel should watch around our tents by night, and command his blessing on the labours and enjoyments of the day, if the voice of prayer is never heard in our dwelling, and the grateful incense of praise never ascends to Heaven under our roof? His sun, indeed, shines, and his rain falls upon the evil as well as the good. Yet, methinks, the omission of so plain a duty should beget in the minds of men, if they were not lost to all sense of reason and religion, a painful jealousy that Providence might possibly for-

sake them. This, however, is certain, they hereby deprive themselves of many a pleasing reflection, which directly tends to mitigate the evils, and sweeten the pleasures of domestic life.

On the good morals of the several members of a family the safety, peace, honour, and welfare of the whole depend. What miserable disorder, animosity, and sometimes poverty too, enter those houses from whence truth, decency and sobriety depart! The authority of parents is trampled under foot by the lawless extravagance of dissolute children, the substance of the family is wasted in wantonness and riot, servants of no principle become masters, or, if they have any sense of duty, are held at the abject distance of slaves, and the whole house exhibits one sad scene of hatred, jealousy, confusion, and wretchedness. What sober man but shudders at the very idea of these evils! But do these evils prevail in the habitations consecrated to the service of God? A form of religion there may be where there is not the power, and secret villany may in some few instances be cloaked under the specious pretext of family devotion. But where the heads of families do, upon principle, maintain regularly the worship of God in their houses, we may be bold to affirm vice will not reign triumphant there. At the voice of prayer the wretched demon will depart, I should rather say, will forbear to enter. David having implored the presence of almighty God under his roof, and vowed that he would walk within his house with a perfect heart, instantly exerts the authority of a master to drive every species of immorality thence *a*. As the right discharge of this duty will oblige those who preside in families to lead virtuous lives themselves, so it will have a happy effect to secure the reverence and affection of those committed to their care. And O how pleasing to see those excellent morals exemplified in the tempers and conduct of superiors and inferiors, which their daily mutual prayers and praises lay them under the strongest obligations to cultivate and maintain!

The piety of a family too will hereby be not a little promoted. The ardent cries of devout parents, encircled by their young offspring at the feet of divine Mercy, have sometimes drawn tears from their little eyes, and fixed an abiding impression of the truth and importance of religion upon their tender

a Psal. ci.

hearts. And instances might be mentioned of servants who, by their attendance on these duties, have been awakened to a serious concern for the salvation of their souls. And O how transporting the reflection in such a case to a master who fears God, and conscientiously discharges his duty—*This and that man was born in my house!* And however these services, through various causes, are not always performed with the like fervour and affection, few I suppose who have entered into the spirit of religion but will acknowledge, that a flame of pure devotion has been sometimes kindled in their breasts on these occasions, and the effect has often been considerable, to restrain them from sin, and to prompt them to holiness.

In fine, let a vain and giddy world, under the prejudices of depraved nature, conceive unfavourably, if they will, of the duty we have been recommending—conceive of it as inimical to cheerfulness and pleasure; the reverse, we may venture to affirm, is the case. What can more directly tend to banish fear, gloominess, and melancholy from our dwellings, than the daily imploring the protection and blessing of Providence, and the approbation and smiles of divine grace! What sound can there possibly be so cheerful and enlivening as *the voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous* [a]! What friendships so firm, what attachments so cordial, and what domestic joys so highly flavoured, as those which are tinctured, improved, and kept alive by a genuine sense of religion! Go into the families where good nature, good sense, and piety reign, where they all join hand in hand, and mutually support and promote each other; and say whether happiness is not to be found there. You will not, indeed, be disturbed with that loud unmeaning kind of laughter which characterizes fools, and is as the crackling of thorns under the pot. But you will see sweetness, serenity, and cheerfulness, in the countenances of all around you; you will hear such discourse as is entertaining and improving; and you will be the admiring witness of a thousand acts of the most endearing friendship and love.

Thus have we established our general proposition, that it is the duty of every family, in their own separate habitation, to offer daily prayer and praise to God. May we all be persuad-

[a] Psal. cxviii. 15.

ed by these considerations to erect an altar to the God of Israel, in the tents his providence hath pitched for us!

PART II.

HAVING considered our obligations to the practice of *Family Worship*, we now proceed, as was proposed,

SECONDLY, To lay down certain rules for the right conducting this delightful and improving exercise.

Here it will be proper to observe, that the rules we have to propose are chiefly of a prudential kind, and are therefore meant to be submitted, with all due caution and deference, to the judgment and discretion of those who preside in families. Indeed some of them will be founded on intimations thrown out occasionally in Scripture: and, if the Scriptures are silent as to the rest, it will not be wondered at, since the circumstances of families widely differ, and of consequence what is merely accidental to this duty, must be left to conscience and prudence to adjust, according to the nature of the case.

Now the rules we shall lay down will refer to—*the Season* allotted for family worship—*the Service* itself—and our *Behaviour* in it.

I. We begin with *the Season* allotted for family worship.

There certainly should be some fixed stated time for this duty: its importance, methinks, demands this. Shall we have fixed times for our meals, our going to rest, and our various civil businesses; and no fixed season for worshipping God? On urgent occasions it may be necessary to depart from the established rule. But if there be no certain known time, it is much if the service is not every now and then omitted; or, however, it is probable the family will often be so dispersed, as not to be easily called together. On the contrary, regularity will in many respects have a very good effect. The hour of prayer being expected, the affairs of the house will be thrown into such a train, as that few if any will be hindered from attending. The indecent hurrying manner in which this duty is too often performed, where no regard is had to a fixed time, will be prevented. And indeed an attention to this one point, will have no small influence on the orderly management of all the other businesses of the day.

What the exact hour should be, every family must determine for itself. The profession, occupation, health, number, and avocations of a family, are all circumstances which considerably affect this question. But, for various reasons, it seems highly fit that God should be worshipped twice a-day: I mean, morning and evening. This idea strikes most serious people in regard of private prayer. How natural when we rise from our beds in the morning, and our faculties are in the most vigorous state, to offer thanks to God for the protection and rest of the night! And how natural in the evening, to acknowledge the mercies of the day, to confess the sins and follies of it, and to commend ourselves to the care of divine Providence on our beds! So sensible were the Pagans themselves of the fitness of these seasons for religious worship, that one of their philosophers says, *At the rising and setting of the sun and moon, we might see and hear both Greeks and Barbarians, all of them, whether in adversity or prosperity, prostrating themselves and making supplication a.* The Pythagoreans were used to retire in the morning by themselves, and then meet together in some place proper for devotion, and at night to recollect the actions of the day before they went to sleep *b.* David and Daniel were accustomed, as we have seen, to offer prayer and praise at these seasons, and others too *c.* If then it is the voice of nature, that each one should in his separate capacity worship God, at the beginning and close of the day, the same reasoning seems to hold good with respect to families; not to say that in the instances just mentioned, there may be a reference to social as well as private prayer.

Here may I be allowed to express a wish, that the duty we are recommending be attended to before breakfast in the morning, and before supper at night? The advantage resulting from this order, if it can be conveniently admitted, is considerable. In the first instance, besides the idea of its being most natural to begin the day with God, the service, thus disposed, will be

a Ανατιλλοντος τε ηλιου και σιληνης και προς δυσμας ιοντων, προκυλισεις αμα και προσκυνησεις ακουοντες τε και ορωντες Ελληνων τε και βαρβαρων παντων εν συμφοραις παντοιαις εχομενων και εν ευπραγιαις.—PLATO de legibus, lib. 10.

b See Gale's Court of the Gentiles, Part II. Book 2. Ch. 6.

c Psal. lv. 17.—Dan. vi. 10.

in less danger of suffering interruption from secular affairs, than if it were postponed to a further hour. And in the latter, it will in all likelihood be performed with much greater seriousness before the usual repast of the evening than after it, when some, if not all present, are frequently overpowered with sleep. Were this custom generally adopted, it would have the good effect, too, to prevent those late convivial meetings at night, which are as inimical to domestic virtue and happiness as to serious religion.

But we must not dismiss this head, without taking some notice of the space of time to be employed in this service. The hurrying it over in a few minutes, and the protracting it to an unreasonable and tedious length, are each of them evils that ought to be carefully avoided. In the general, a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes, may be deemed a sufficient portion of time for all the purposes of this interesting duty. But that term may be shortened or lengthened as occasion requires: and no doubt every prudent man will be governed in this matter by the circumstances of his family, the frame of mind he is himself in, and the age, health, and particular cast of those who make up this little assembly. He will take care how he gives disgust by dull prolixity, on the one hand; and how he defeats all the great ends of edification by trifling brevity, on the other. —Thus much may suffice, in the first place, for *the season* allotted for family worship. Let us now proceed,

II. To consider what Christian prudence and piety dictate respecting *the Service* itself.

It is to consist of *Prayer*, *Praise*, and *Instruction*: this we have already clearly proved. Our object now is to shew how these several parts of family worship may be most profitably performed.

1. As to *the reading of the Scriptures.*

Much will depend, with the blessing of God, on the prudent management of this part of the service. The bible should be read in regular order, especially the historical books of it. The portion allotted to be read should not be large, that the memory may not be overburdened. Perhaps the devotional parts of Scripture may best suit the morning, and the historical the evening. Whoever reads should speak audibly, distinctly, and

slowly. In some houses, where there are children, it has been the practice for the master to call upon each of them to repeat a verse of the chapter that has been read, and in a few words to explain it to them. And in others, a section of a chapter has been read, and the comment of some practical expositor upon it. This part of the service may be comprised within the compass of about ten minutes. But we mean not to dictate on these matters. If edification is the grand object, and there is prudence to direct, no doubt such mode of instruction will be adopted, as best suits the circumstances of the family.

2. *The offering praise to God* is certainly another important branch of family worship, and may be included in the general idea of prayer. But the singing a few stanzas of a psalm or hymn, if it can be conveniently practised, will greatly enliven the service. *Let the word of Christ*, says the apostle, *dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord* a. The situation, indeed, of some houses, the smallness of the family, and their total ignorance of psalmody, are circumstances unfavourable to this delightful practice. But with a little attention and management it might, I think, be more generally admitted, at least one part of the day, than it is. We submit it, however, to the judgment and discretion of the heads of houses.

3. *Prayer* comes next to be considered.

This will lie upon the master of the family, or upon some other person properly qualified who happens to be present. The objection which has been often urged to this duty, arising from the want of proper talents for the discharging it acceptably and profitably, we shall largely examine hereafter. What we have here in view is, to offer advice to those serious people who have got over this difficulty, and do practise extempore-prayer in their families. Your candid and close attention, Sirs, to the particulars we have here to observe, permit us earnestly to intreat. Much depends upon it.—When you go down on your knees, remember that you are in the presence of almighty God, that you are the representative as it were of your whole family, and that the proper or improper discharge of this duty will be likely

a Col. iii. 16.

to have an important effect on their temper and conduct. Be therefore serious and self-collected.—Do not hurry over the service in a thoughtless, negligent, customary manner. If you do, you will not only offend God, but unhappily contribute to the habituating those around you to a careless trifling mode of treatment of divine things.—Give full scope to that genuine flame of devotion which may on some occasions especially be excited in your breast. But take heed that you do not launch out into such extravagancies of expression as will not fail, instead of edifying, to disgust those who hear you.—Let your language be plain and intelligible, that the dullest capacities in your house may not be at a loss to comprehend your meaning.—Some general method observed in the ordering your prayer, will contribute not a little to edification.—Consider the circumstances of your family, and suit your petitions to their several exigencies. —Avoid, as much as may be, a sameness of expression: variety will not only please, but have a great effect to secure the attention.—And permit me to add, that tediousness ought to be particularly guarded against. Our Saviour you know, earnestly cautions his disciples against *using vain repetitions, as the heathens did, who thought they should be heard for their much speaking* a. It is true, on particular occasions, some indulgence in regard of the length of family prayer may be very properly allowed. The occasions I refer to are such as these, the evening of the day devoted to public worship; seasons distinguished by extraordinary providential occurrences; and those pleasing moments in which he who takes the lead in family-duty, feels his heart more than ordinarily affected with the great things of God. A little transgression in regard of length on these occasions will be easily forgiven, and indeed the fervour of devotion that then prevails, will, it may be hoped, so diffuse itself through the family as that few present will think the service tedious. But on ordinary occasions, to draw out a prayer to twenty minutes, or half an hour, is, to say the best of it, extremely imprudent. How is it to be expected that the attention of children and servants should be held with any pleasure to such an exercise, thus constantly returning morning and evening? Indeed it must be difficult for any to support with patience,

a Matt. vi. 7.

under the weight of that unsufferable tautology which too often disgraces such services. But I forbear—It is time now,

III. To consider *the Behaviour* required of the family in general on these occasions.

Every one in the house, it is presumed, will see it his duty to attend; and we may hope, if the service is properly conducted, will be disposed to do so. But if any, through a total disaffection to religion, should contemptuously turn his back upon the worship of God, such a depraved member of the society or *church*, as our text styles it, well deserves to be excluded from it. But there is little danger of this in well regulated families, where good nature and authority are happily blended in the character and deportment of those who preside over them. Nor should any be permitted to absent themselves on these occasions, unless for very justifiable reasons. With Cornelius the master of the family should have it in his power to say, *We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded us of him* [a].

Thus assembled it should be the concern of every one to behave himself with reverence and seriousness. How disgusting to see an air of indifference, if not levity, on the countenances of one and another, as is too often the case! Such a demeanour is very indecent, and must be highly offensive to God. The attention should be wholly taken off from civil businesses and amusements, and fixed with all possible seriousness to what we are about. When the Romans sacrificed, before the procession went a public crier, proclaiming aloud to the people, *Hoc age*, to give them notice that they should forbear working, and attend to the solemnity. In like manner we should charge it upon ourselves, to mind well the duty we are engaged in, to hear diligently the word that is read, and to follow closely with our thoughts the petitions that are offered. To this end we should remember, that we are in the immediate presence of the great God, who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked; and who, as he has required this service at our hands, so has therein consulted our real good.

Nor are decency and attention only required of us, our affections too should be suitably engaged in what we are about. As

[a] Acts x. 33.

seriousness ought to be opposed to levity, so devotion to formality. This latter evil is to be carefully guarded against, and the rather as the frequency and shortness of these periodical exercises too often prove an occasion of it. How have the most sublime duties of religion with many people, in a course of time, dwindled into a form! And when this has come to be the case, services that are in their own nature and tendency most rational, improving, and entertaining, have become irksome and burdensome. This therefore should be particularly dreaded in regard of the duty we are recommending, because, as we have observed, the temptation to it is so considerable. I am sensible, indeed, it is scarce to be expected, that every one in a family should have a real taste for the exalted pleasures of devotion; and in such case decency and attention is the most we can look for. But more than this is to be expected of those who have entered into the spirit of religion; and such we suppose to be their character who preside on these occasions. The heads of families, therefore, more especially, should be on their guard, lest formality, to which they are liable in a degree as well as others, steal upon them at unawares; and so, like the fly in the pot of ointment, spoil the savour of these pleasant exercises. And of this evil they should be the more jealous, because it will beget a dulness and insipidness in their manner of conducting family worship, which will tend to confirm the prejudices of young people and servants against it. And thus, by the way, we are enabled to account for the disuse into which this most reasonable and important duty hath fallen. Formality begets dullness, dullness weariness, weariness disgust, and disgust neglect. O therefore, if we have religion at heart, let us endeavour to diffuse the sweet and enlivening spirit of it through these short exercises! Let us read, and hear the Scriptures read, with all the attention and eagerness of those who believe and know them to be the word of God. Let the fragrant incense of genuine gratitude and love perfume our praises, deep contrition of heart accompany our confessions, and ardent desires ascend with our petitions. Thus family worship will not be a task, but a most pleasing and cheerful service.

In fine, great care ought to be taken that our deportment through the day be agreeable to the solemn professions we thus

make morning and evening. The dignity of our character as Christians should be expressed by an upright, serious, and manly behaviour; and the loveliness of it by our good-nature, benevolence, and cheerfulness. Having officiated at the altar of our God, we should preserve a suitable decorum of conduct both at home and abroad; and not suffer the holy vestments in which we have sacrificed to be polluted with sin. Like David, we should walk within our house with a perfect heart, and with a pleasant countenance; and so give proof to all that family worship is no way inimical, but most friendly to our real happiness. —It remains that we now,

THIRDLY, Consider the objections that are usually urged against a regular attention to this duty, and endeavour to obviate them.

After what has been said, it is presumed no one will be so hardy as to maintain, that God has not required this service at our hands. We have clearly proved that it is a dictate of nature, that the Scriptures have enjoined it, and that it tends to promote both our temporal and spiritual welfare. The objections, therefore, we have to combat are of a practical kind. We shall rank them under three heads, those which result, first, from *a total disaffection to religion*; secondly, from *a criminal indifference* to it; and, thirdly, from a very *censurable* kind of *timidity and weakness.*

1. Men who have *no sense of religion*, and who yet have not thrown off the public profession of it, do many of them object, that "the practice is now-a-days so singular, that it would expose them to the contemptuous sneer of their neighbours and acquaintance."

An objection this which one would think a man of sense and spirit should be ashamed to make. What! will you justify your omission of a duty, which the light of nature and revelation teaches, by the general neglect of those around you? This sort of reasoning might be urged in favour of all manner of wickedness and villany. Must we follow a multitude to do evil? No surely. Neither should we then follow a multitude in the omission of what is good and praise-worthy. But this objection, proceeding from pusillanimity, is an imputation upon your resolution as well as your understanding. What shameful cow-

ridice, to suffer yourselves to be laughed out of your duty, by people who have not sense enough to disguise their contempt of religion with even the shadow of a reason! Void of all manly courage, you are less deserving of the authority you hold in your house, than the meanest servant in it. But the impiety of the objection is the main consideration. The language of it is, that you had rather obey men than God, endure his frowns than theirs. And think you that this will not awaken the resentments of Heaven against you? Yes, the day, the awful day, is coming, when it shall be told in the hearing of angels and men, that the sneer of a contemptible infidel had more weight with you than the disapprobation of him who made you.

2. Others, more through *a criminal indifference* to religion than a dread of the censure of the world, object that *their affairs are so circumstanced that they cannot conveniently worship God in their families.*

But, in how trifling a point of light must such persons view this duty! Consider, I beseech you, what has been said of its nature, utility, and importance; and tell us whether you can seriously think, that every other business ought to take the precedence of this. Do you from day to day go without your food and rest, and excuse the neglect by saying, that you have not convenient time for the one or the other? If you were sensible, as you ought to be, that your success in worldly business depends upon the favour of Providence, and that what you get cannot be properly enjoyed without the divine blessing; and especially if you were duly sensible of the vast importance of your best interests, and of those of your family; you would blush at making so frivolous an excuse. A firm persuasion that there is a God, and that he requires this service at your hands, would bear down before it much greater obstructions than you have to complain of. Be the hurries of business what they may, is there no time to be redeemed from rest, and other sensual gratifications, for the worship of him to whose goodness you owe all your enjoyments? It is no long tedious service that is required of you. And your habitation must be very strait and inconvenient indeed, if it will not admit of some place to which you and your children may retire, to offer a few petitions

to Heaven. Think with yourselves whether these excuses will bear a serious reflection. Can you lay your hand on your heart, and say, your conscience is satisfied with them? If not, will they avail you any thing on that great occasion, when you will be called to a strict account for these neglects? O realize that awful day! It is quickly approaching. The warnings you have received, the examples of praying-families around you, the evils your children and servants suffer through these criminal omissions of yours, and even the regard that Pagans themselves have in their way paid to this duty, will all rise up in judgment against you. O be entreated then to give no longer heed to these frivolous objections, but to set about this business immediately, with all the attention and seriousness which its importance demands!—But there is one more objection,

3. And lastly, which as it proceeds not from a contempt of religion or indifference to it, but from *timid bashfulness and weakness*, deserves to be treated with tenderness and pity. It is this: "I would gladly worship God in my family, but am not qualified to conduct the service in a decent, agreeable, and edifying manner."

If this objection arises from an apprehension, that by engaging in this duty you will hazard your reputation for good sense and elocution, in the opinion of your children and servants, it is a very censurable one. It is an argument of a weak mind. For what though you do fail in ease and propriety of expression, the authority you hold in your family ought surely to make you superior to any apprehensions of this sort from those who are so much your inferiors. And it is an argument of some defect too in your religious character. For a regard to the great God, who requires this duty of you, and in whose presence it is to be performed, ought to subdue the first risings of pride in your breast.

But you insist that "you really have not the gift of prayer." Let me beseech you to consider what prayer is. It is the offering our desires to God. Words are of no account in regard of him: it is the sincerity, humility, and fervency of our spirit he looks at. In regard of others, however, words are necessary: but if they are plain and intelligible, that is enough. Now, possessed of suitable desires and affections, and having overcome that timidity we just spoke of, you will not be at so great a loss

for words as you are ready to imagine. You feel your wants both temporal and spiritual, your own and those of your family: where then is the great difficulty of enumerating them either more generally or particularly, and of earnestly entreating God to supply them? You feel and enjoy those blessings you have received: where then, I may add, is the great difficulty of reciting and acknowledging them with expressions of gratitude and praise?—Further, the way to obtain a freedom of praying in your family, is to accustom yourself to free prayer in your retirements. He who regularly maintains intercourse with God in his closet, will soon find himself qualified for it in his family.—But even admitting that you cannot, after all, summon together resolution enough for the profitable discharge of this duty, you are not justified in the neglect of family-worship: for there are forms of prayer which you may use, and which it is infinitely better to use, than wholly to neglect this important service.—And now this objection removed, permit me to entreat you, as you tender the honour of God, the prosperity of your family, and your own comfort, to erect immediately an altar in your tent, and to offer thereon, with pure hands and fervent lips, daily sacrifices of prayer and praise to Heaven.

Before we put a period to this discourse, you will allow me to detain your attention a moment to two religious exercises, not yet mentioned, which come within the idea of Family worship. The one is *ordinary*, and the other *extraordinary*. As to the former, it is *the asking a blessing*, and *returning thanks* at our meals. This is a very natural duty, and pretty generally practised among sober people. How fit, when we sit down at our tables, to beg of God to command his blessing on the food his providence has prepared for us! And when we rise, to make our grateful acknowledgments for the refreshment we have received! Nor are we without sufficient authority in Scripture for this practice. The apostle exhorts us, in general, *Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God* a. And in another place tells us, that *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer* b. Our Saviour's example too has added a pleasing and

a 1 Cor. x. 31. b 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

most important sanction to this custom. When he fed the multitude in the wilderness, 'he took the loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks *a*.' When he instituted the holy supper, in commemoration of his death, 'he took bread and blessed it: and he took the cup also, and gave thanks *b*.' And when he sat at meat with the disciples at Emmaus, 'he took bread and blessed it *c*.' Nothing more need be said, in general, to enforce this duty.

But the careless manner in which it is too often performed, deserves very severe reprehension. The saying grace, as it is usually called, is in most instances a mere form, as may be too sadly suspected from the negligent air on the countenances of most present. And, in some instances, the words are so hastily and irreverently spoken, that the form itself borders very nearly on profaneness. The offence which this has justly given to serious people, has driven some of them into an opposite extreme, which hath not failed to be sharply censured as savouring of pharisaicism. Prudence and piety plainly dictate the medium between the two extremes. Let us be serious and self-collected whilst, in two or three sentences, we are addressing ourselves to God. The importance of this is great. For it stands to reason that a heedless desultory manner of performing this duty must be very offensive to God, and not only defeat the salutary ends of the service, but tend to fix a habit of trifling with sacred things.

We shall close the whole, with submitting to the consideration of masters of families, a few thoughts on a service of an *extraordinary* kind, in which our pious ancestors, and some, I trust, now living, have found their account: I mean, the setting apart a day, on special occasions, for solemn prayer and thanksgiving to God. The reasonableness and utility of such services, in regard of nations and churches, have been generally admitted: and I know not why they should not be admitted in regard of private families. It is true, some families may be so circumstanced as to render the observation of a day of fasting and prayer absolutely impracticable: or, however, it would be difficult for them to fix on a time in which the business of the house would allow all of them to attend. But this surely is,

a Matt. xv. 36. *b* Matt. xxvi. 26, 27. *c* Luke xxiv. 30.

not the case with every family. Nor is it to be doubted but most good people might, in the course of a year or two, or at certain periods of their lives, find a convenient season for this purpose, if they were really sensible of the importance of it. To fix upon your minds, therefore, a sense of its importance is my object; and then the time, and manner of conducting the service, may very well be submitted to discretion.

Events of a momentous kind do sometimes take place in families, such as births, deaths, change of habitation, and other extraordinary providences either adverse or prosperous. Now if on such occasions *every family*, to use the language of the prophet Zechariah, were to mourn, and pray, and offer praise *apart* [a]; would not such service be acceptable to God, and highly beneficial to themselves? A giddy world, who pay little attention to the providence of God in their temporal concerns, and less to the religious interests of their families, may treat what we are recommending with contempt. But will a wise, prudent, serious man, who has the welfare of his house at heart, say that this is an unmeaning unnecessary service? Figure to yourself such a little assembly, on a fixed day, convened, without noise or ostentation, in some retired part of the house, there seriously recollecting their past sins and mercies, there earnestly pleading with God for a blessing, there cheerfully acknowledging his goodness, and there cordially devoting themselves to his service; figure to yourself, I say, such a little assembly, consisting of parents, children and servants, all deeply impressed with the solemnity of this extraordinary act of domestic worship, and tell us, whether it is not a lovely sight. Can any one find it in his heart to sneer at the idea of such a service as trifling, nugatory, and unprofitable? Or will any one in his sober senses pronounce such a day a lost day? Be that as it may, they who have enjoyed the comfort of these solemnities, and felt the substantial benefit that results from them, will think and act otherwise. May the number of such assemblies increase in our land! and may they joyfully accept the salutation of an inspired apostle!—*Greet the church that is in their house.*

[a] Zech. xii. 14.

DISCOURSE IV.

RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

EPH. v. 33.—*Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

As all societies, civil and religious, originate from families; so families derive from that first and most important of all social connections, the conjugal relation. Upon the right discharge, therefore, of the duties of this relation, the welfare and happiness of mankind in general very much depend. To explain and enforce these duties is the object of the present discourse.

Previous to this, it will be necessary to consider what it is that constitutes the conjugal relation, or the true grounds and reasons of it. The conjugal or marriage relation is not the result merely of a connection of the sexes: for if that were the case, there would be no such thing as fornication. It is a result of a solemn contract between one man and one woman, to live together as husband and wife, till death shall part them. This is what we call marriage, what we maintain was instituted by God in the beginning, and what our Saviour refers to in the following words, 'Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female? And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder *a*.' To the same purpose the apostle speaks in the verse but one before our text.

Now upon these words, together with the further light which Scripture in concert with the law of nature hath thrown upon them, these four important positions are founded—that the conjugal relation can lawfully subsist between one man and one woman only—that the parties must be competent to the entering

a Matt. xix. 4—6.

into such contract—that the contract ought to be duly attested—and that adultery and death only can dissolve it. The particular discussion of all these questions, would carry us to too great a length. We shall therefore insist chiefly on the first of them; and say little more even on this than is necessary to open the way for an explanation of the duties of the marriage state, which it is the object of this discourse to recommend.

We affirm then, that "the conjugal relation can lawfully subsist between one man and one woman only." It is generally admitted with respect to the woman, for reasons obvious at first view, that she cannot marry any other man during the life of her husband. But it has been doubted respecting the man. We shall therefore prove that he can only lawfully marry one woman. And this we insist is the language of *Nature* and of *Christ.*

I. As to *the Law of Nature.*

God created man male and female, that is, one woman to a man. The conjugal relation, therefore, in the primitive and perfect state of human nature, did, and could only subsist between two persons. Since that, a nearly equal proportion of the sexes hath generally prevailed throughout the world. Indeed it hath been thought, that the number of male-children born exceeds that of females. But this fact, considering the more numerous accidents men are exposed to than women, confirms the notion, that it is the wise intention of Providence that such an equality should prevail as naturally leads to the primitive idea, of one man's having one wife and no more. The ends of marriage, too, can only, in their full extent, be answered by its being confined to one man and one woman. These ends are two, the conservation and increase of the human species, and the mutual comfort and assistance of the parties united in this relation. As to the first, it would in all probability be better attained by an honourable and permanent connection between two persons, agreeable to the original dictate of nature, than by a multiplication of wives. But as to the latter, it is evident to a demonstration, that a departure from the primitive institution, in that idea of it for which we are contending, hath in innumerable instances totally defeated it.

Nothing can be more degrading to the female part of mankind, than to consider them as created merely for the purpose

first mentioned. He that can admit the idea dishonours himself as well as them. The powers with which nature hath liberally endowed them, render them capable both of enjoying, and of contributing very largely to the refined pleasures of friendship and society. Agreeably to this idea, if we may be allowed to advert to Scripture when we are reasoning from the law of nature, we hear the blessed God saying, when he had created our first progenitor, *It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help-meet for him* a. As if he had said, *It is fit that man whom I have made for society, should have one for his companion, with whom he may intimately converse, and who may assist him in the duties and be a sharer with him in the joys of life.* Nothing therefore can be clearer than that the woman was created, and given to man in marriage, not merely for the purpose of propagating the species, but for that of promoting his and her own felicity. And from hence it as clearly follows, that what tends to defeat this great end is contrary to the original law of nature.

And who can doubt that considers human nature, and the history of domestic society, that Polygamy is subversive of the real interest and happiness of both parties? The woman who is married to a man, has as much right to his love, confidence, and support, as he has to hers. Their interest in each other is mutual, and since God has made man male and female, why not equal? But can it be imagined, that where others are admitted to a copartnership with her in the marriage relation, she can have that entire interest in his affections to which she possesses this natural claim b? Or if that were possible, the painful jealousy that she hath not such interest in his affections, is an evil to which, upon the common grounds of equity, she ought

a Gen. ii. 18.

b "Polygamy is not only inconsistent with our forms and the very letter of the marriage-contract, but with the essence of marriage, which lies in such a union and love as can only be between two. Aristotle doth not allow there can be even perfect friendship between more than two: much less, therefore, perfect love. Πολλοις ειναι φιλοι, κατα την τελειαν φιλιαν, ουκ ενδεχεται, ωσπερ ουδ' ερας πολλων αμα. 'It is impossible to be a friend to a great many, I mean, to be in perfect friendship with them, as it is impossible to have a love for a great many at the same time.'—*Eth.* Εστι γαρ φιλος αλλος αυτος. 'For a friend is a second self.'"—*Ibid.*—WOLLASTON's Relig. of Nat. delin. Sect. VIII.

not to be subjected. But, were she wholly free from this jealousy, and disposed to acquiesce in the will of her husband, there would even yet be many inconveniencies and miseries resulting from this mode of life to all parties, and more especially in the end to the man himself, who has thus unjustifiably departed from the original perfection of the marriage-state.

That these reasonings respecting the ill-tendency of Polygamy are just, might be largely proved by innumerable testimonies taken from sacred and profane history, and indeed instances before our own eyes. But in order to confirm the idea that the law of nature is against it, it shall suffice to observe, that the contrary practice has obtained among most civilized nations, who have best understood the rights of mankind, and the true interests of society.—But to proceed, this practice will be found upon enquiry to be conformable,

II. To *the Law of Christ.*

When the Pharisees put that ensnaring question to our Saviour; 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' He answers in the negative, It is not; telling them that 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and that whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery *a*.' And this decision he justifies, by referring them back to the original institution of marriage, and the true grounds and reasons of it. 'Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female? And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh *b*.' Now this recital of the words of the institution, to the purpose of proving that a man ought not to divorce his wife, puts it beyond a doubt that the phrase of *a man's cleaving to his wife* intends more than mere cohabitation, even nothing less than a solemn contract between the two parties. For if cohabitation only were meant, and this constituted marriage, it would not have applied to the point it was brought to prove. The question of the Pharisees was, Whether a man lawfully married (and more than cohabitation was necessary among the Jews to

a Matt. xix. 8, 9. *b* Ver. 4, 5.

constitute marriage *a*) might put away his wife? Now the words of the institution, thus understood, clearly justify our Saviour's conclusion. God, having made man male and female, hath ordained that the man should cleave to his wife, that is, that they two should solemnly contract to become man and wife, and so cohabiting together should be one flesh. 'Wherefore,' adds our Lord, 'they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder *b*.' As if he had said, "It is his will who has thus instituted marriage, that he who is lawfully married or contracted to another, should not put her away, except it be for fornication."

But it is evident our Lord's reasoning extends further than to the prohibition of divorces, even to that of Polygamy. For, first, he founds the marriage institution upon the fact, that God had in the beginning made man male and female, one woman to one man, which proportion, as we have observed before, hath generally prevailed through the world. *For this cause*, says he, that is, *this being the case that man was originally created male and female, a man should cleave to his wife, one man to one woman.* The reasoning is strong from the idea of the first pair to mankind's being distributed into pairs afterwards. But the transition from the mention of a male and female, Adam and Eve, to a marriage connection between one man and many women, is very unnatural, if not absurd and absolutely inconclusive. The terms too of the marriage institution are conformable to the idea of one man and one woman, and cannot, without a manifest force put upon them, be understood in a further latitude—*a man* shall cleave to *his wife—they twain*, one man and one woman, *shall be one flesh*—they are no more *twain*, but *one* flesh. Further, a prohibition of Polygamy is manifestly involved in the very words by which our Lord prohibits divorces, *Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.* If our Saviour had meant to allow men to have as many wives as they please, however he might have forbidden their parting with any of them, he could not, consistently with himself, have forbidden their

a See Deut. xxii. 23, 24. Where a virgin betrothed to a man is expressly called his wife.

b Matt. xix. 6.

marrying another; and made that, as he expressly does, adultery. To all which it must be added, that what the disciples observe upon the occasion, clearly proves that they understood him to be an enemy to Polygamy. For otherwise with what propriety could they have objected, 'If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry *a*?' Had they conceived that whilst our Saviour forbad them to put away their wives, he allowed them to have others, they surely would not have made this complaint.

The law of Christ being thus expressly against Polygamy, the whole tenor of the New Testament is against it also. We read of none among the disciples who had more wives than one. Particular care was taken, as this evil did prevail among the Jews, and some so circumstanced might be converted to the Christian faith, that yet bishops and deacons should be chosen from among those that had but one wife. The apostle's whole discourse concerning marriage, in the seventh of the first epistle to the Corinthians, best agrees with that idea of it we have been recommending; and he speaks in point to this question when he says, verse the second, 'Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.' Occasional references, too, to marriage in the epistles, fall in with our Saviour's notion of the original purity and perfection of that state. And this is particularly observable in the account given us of it in the chapter whence we have taken our text. Indeed it is sufficient to remark the unity of language observed in the text itself; *Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

And now, the point thus established by the authority of the law of nature, and the law of Christ, that the conjugal relation ought to subsist between one man and one woman only, the event of the question with respect to the Jews will not materially affect us. Since, however, there is an intimate and important connection between the Christian and Jewish dispensations, and it would be injurious to them both to suppose, that the law of nature and the law of Moses do in any instance clash with each other, it may be proper to enquire how far, and upon what grounds, Polygamy obtained before the coming of Christ,

a Matt. xix. 10.

It is admitted that there were those among the patriarchs, and among the Israelites and Jews afterwards, who had more than one wife: though the practice was not perhaps so universal as some have imagined. But how was it, say you, that any good men, men who were acknowledged to be so by God, should violate the law of nature, and a law too which Christ has since so expressly established; and not be reproved and punished for such conduct?

In order to our replying satisfactorily to this question, we must, first, settle the true idea of the law of nature. The *law of nature*, or the *moral law*, is that code or compendium of duties arising from our relation to God and one another, which is discoverable by the dictates of reason and conscience. This is no doubt the law of God, and is universal and unchangeable: that is, where such and such relations subsist, the duties resulting from them are universally and perpetually the same. But a change in the relation, or in the circumstances of the relation, may and often will occasion a change in the duty; while it still remains true that the law of nature, or of God, is invariably the same. Thus, marriage between brothers and sisters is now generally deemed contrary to the law of nature, but in the beginning the law of nature required it: that is to say, the circumstances of the relation are changed, and so what was then fit and necessary is now unfit and improper.

To apply this reasoning to the matter before us, the voice of nature in the beginning, and through most ages and parts of the world, down to the present time, hath been against Polygamy: and yet things may have been so circumstanced in some states and kingdoms, at certain periods, as to justify the tolerating it. The Athenians, having been miserably wasted by a plague, adopted this measure (which by their regular constitution was deemed impolitic) for the purpose of re-peopling their state *a*. And Julius Cæsar, for the like purpose of increasing the commonwealth, had it once in contemplation to introduce a law allowing every man to marry as many wives as he chose *b*. And it is

a Diog. Laer. Socrat. Lib. II. § 26.

b "Helvius Cinna tribunus plebis plerisque confessus est, habuisse se scriptam paratamque legem, quam Cæsar ferre jussisset, quum ipse abesset, uti uxores liberorum quærendorum causa, quas, et quot ducere vellet liceret."

SUETON. *Jul. Cæs.* cap. 52.

easy to imagine, that in the early ages of the world there might be reasons of a similar kind, in one place and another, for this practice, which though they would not absolutely authorise it, yet might considerably lessen the evil of it. The practice having once obtained, the inordinate passions of men would naturally enough precipitate them greedily into it. And as the patriarchs emigrated from among idolaters and polygamists, it is not to be wondered that they brought away with them some of the evil customs in which they had been educated. Much less is it to be wondered at, all things considered, that their descendants the Israelites, should copy after their progenitors in this particular. Such a havoc had Pharaoh made among their male children, that, although the providence of God prevented his exterminating them, it is probable their number, when they left Egypt, was considerably less than that of the females. And this circumstance might, in their apprehension, render that highly expedient to which they felt themselves strongly prone. And the effect of example, custom, and fashion we all know to be great. To which it may be added, that the idea of the Messiah's originating among them, gave rise to an ardent and universal wish in the heads of families to be the parents of a numerous offspring, each one hoping that this illustrious person might derive from his house. And a wish that was considered as pious, would naturally enough forward a practice, to which men felt themselves allured by passion and example.

How far all these circumstances may be supposed to extenuate the evil of that, which the law of nature in the beginning, and our Lord Jesus Christ since, have absolutely forbidden, we will not pretend to determine. But certain it is, that though Polygamy was permitted, it was not established by the law of Moses. And therefore it can in no sense be said that the law of Moses has contradicted the law of nature. Provision, indeed, Moses expressly made against some of the evils which he clearly foresaw would be consequent upon it *a*, (and which too is a presumptive argument against the practice itself) but this by no means proves that he commanded it. Between *Toleration* and *Establishment* there is a clear distinction. This distinction our Lord has observed in accounting for divorces: and if the per-

a Deut. xxi. 15—17.

mitting divorces infers nothing to the prejudice of the original law of nature in that particular, as our Lord shews by telling us it was not so in the beginning; I know not why the permitting Polygamy among the Jews, should be considered as an argument, that the voice of nature and of God was not against it in the beginning. But there was no direct law to tolerate this practice. That it was however permitted is evident from the fact: and one may easily conceive how the Jews, who were not the best reasoners, might infer from the passage just now referred to, that Moses meant to permit it.

But it will here be said, "Whatever causes might contribute to the prevalence of Polygamy among the Jews, is it not strange that their prophets should not remonstrate against the practice when it rose to any height, and occasionally at least lead back their attention to the original institution from which they had departed?" It is answered this they did. And a remarkable instance we have of it in the prophet Malachi. Having represented the Jews as enquiring wherefore it was that the Lord had not accepted their offerings? he answers, *Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? yet had he the residue of the Spirit: and wherefore one? that he might seek a godly seed: therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth* a. More proper words surely could not have been chosen to express the nature, authority, and ends of the marriage institution.—The woman is described as *the wife of the man's youth, his companion,* and *the wife of his covenant.* So that the relation is the result, not merely of cohabitation, but of virtuous love, social friendship, and solemn contract.—The ground of the relation is, God's having made man male and female—*one*—one pair, one couple.—An important end he had in view by this disposition of things: for, as he was able, having the residue of the Spirit, he might if he pleased have made more women than one, and given them in marriage to the first man: but he made only one woman for one man, to the end *that he might expect a* virtuous, noble, and *godly seed,* the

a Mal. ii. 14, 15.

contrary of which might be naturally apprehended from one man's having connection with many women. This interpretation of the passage is so easy and natural, that it would require no small ingenuity to persuade us to believe, that Polygamy was totally out of the prophet's view, and that he meant no more than to dissuade the Jews from divorcing their own proper wives, and contracting marriage with their idolatrous neighbours.

It remains now to be observed, that the prevalence of this practice in eastern countries through a long course of years to the present time, if the grounds and reasons of it were duly weighed, would, instead of giving countenance to it, furnish a strong argument in favour of our first proposition, that the law of nature is against it. Three reasons induced Mahomet to interweave the doctrine of Polygamy into his system of religion. He wished to conciliate the regards of the Jews to his imposture, among whom this practice much prevailed at that time. He well knew, from the passion that predominated in his own breast, that it would be highly agreeable to that taste for variety and pleasure which strongly marks the characters of the orientalists. And more than this, he clearly saw how exactly it would fall in with those miserable notions of despotic power, which have from time immemorial tyrannized over those dark and superstitious parts of the world. This last idea, especially when thoroughly unravelled, would not only account for the prevalence of this illicit practice, but clearly prove it to be incompatible with the rights of nature, and that equality which the great ends of intellectual friendship and happiness have established between the sexes.—It is, however, enough for us, that our Lord Jesus Christ has absolutely forbidden it, and grounded the prohibition upon the purity and perfection of the marriage state, as at first instituted in paradise.

Having thus considered the main question, Whether the conjugal relation can lawfully subsist between more than two persons? a few words will suffice respecting the three last.—They who enter into this relation must be competent to the marriage contract. *A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh.* The parties must be of an age, that will allow of their withdrawing from the immediate inspection and care of parents; and that

will enable them, without injury to themselves and society, to accede to the marriage-contract, and fulfil the duties of it. Incestuous marriages are by this description forbidden: as likewise all such other alliances as do manifestly defeat the ends of the institution.—The marriage-covenant should likewise be attested by proper witnesses, that the validity of it may be defended. And they who are thus joined together are not to be put asunder, unless the adulterous commerce of either party with other persons dissolve the matrimonial bond; which it certainly does, since the end of the marriage-contract, namely, that they *twain might be one flesh*, is thereby defeated.

What has been thus observed concerning the nature, authority, and grounds of the conjugal relation, will open the way for a consideration of the duties enjoined in our text.

PART II.

Having taken a general view of the nature, authority, and ends of the conjugal relation, we proceed now to consider the duties of it. They are all comprehended in the ideas of *Love* on the one part, and *Reverence* on the other; and are enforced, in the text and context, by considerations both of nature and religion. But as the right discharge of these duties, and the happiness resulting thence, very much depend upon a correspondence of character, affections, and circumstances between man and wife, it may be proper, before we proceed, to lay down some rules to be observed in the forming this important connection.

Here we will venture to recommend, in the first place, an early period of life as the fittest for entering into this relation. By early life I mean that age when a person, by the general consent of mankind, is deemed *sui juris*, or at his own disposal. Alliances formed previous to this are often followed with very pernicious consequences, as they are in some instances the result of the interested views of others, rather than the judgment and attachment of the parties themselves; and as in too many others they are the effect of a childish passion, wholly unrestrained by prudence and consideration. And, on the contrary, marriages contracted at a later period, often fail of attaining the happiness proposed; as the heart is then less susceptible of the warmth of generous love than in youth, the mind is occupied with ideas

of increasing wealth, and habits are formed which will not easily yield to controul. The marriage connection therefore, agreeable to the plain dictate of nature, should in the general take place in youth; and the rather as hereby a barrier is formed against many very dangerous temptations to which single life is exposed.

The concurrence of parents and friends will ever be an object of great consequence with virtuous and considerate young people. The tender affection of those from whom under God they received their existence, the just authority with which nature has invested them, and the prudence and experience they derive from age, are all striking reasons why children should pay a religious regard to their judgment, advice, and consent in all affairs, but especially in these matters. And it is an argument of very commendable good sense and discretion in youth, so to conduct themselves in the management of this important business, as to secure, if possible, the approbation and respect of all around them.

But what demands the principal attention of those who mean to form this connection, is the subsistence of a sincere friendship and cordial affection between themselves. Without this the duties of the marriage-state will be ill discharged, and the happiness it proposes never attained. Previous, therefore, to either party's suffering their affections to be engaged, it will certainly be their interest to consider well what prudence suggests, on the important questions respecting—*Religion*—*Natural Temper*—*Good Sense*—*Worldly Circumstances*—and *External Accomplishments*.

1. *Religion* I mention first, not only because it is the most important concern of all, but because the exhortation in our text is addressed to those husbands and wives who make a profession of it.

Here, my young friends, especially those of them who are the children of pious parents, will allow me to expostulate with them a moment, on the prodigious importance of their becoming truly religious, and devoting themselves to the service of Christ in his appointments, before they think of changing their condition, and entering on the cares and businesses of life. The inattention of persons at this interesting period to the concerns of their souls, is often followed with the most unhappy consequences. It precludes them from some of the noblest enjoyments, deprives

them of the best supports under affliction, and leaves them to the mercy of a thousand temptations, with which they will be almost instantly assaulted. And it is worthy of particular notice, that few, comparatively speaking, who have begun the world without first giving themselves up to God, have ever after had a heart to concern themselves about these matters. And how sad a sight! to see a young person launching out on the ocean of life without compass or rudder to steer by, and, whether he makes a prosperous or adverse voyage in regard of his temporal interests, yet missing in the end of the haven of everlasting happiness! O be intreated then to remember your Creator in the days of your youth; and, whatever you neglect, to mind the one thing needful, and to choose the better part which shall not be taken from you!

But to return. Religion having been your own grand object, much depends upon your forming an alliance with a person, who is not only virtuous and sober, but of the same character in this respect with yourself. The conjugal relation is the most intimate and endearing in nature: but what happiness is to be expected in this connection, where the one party has a taste for the refined pleasures of piety and devotion, and the other has a total aversion to them? 'Be ye not,' says the apostle, 'unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel *a*?' This reasoning is so clear, that it should not be thought strange if their sincerity is suspected who can, under a profession of religion, for the sake of worldly emolument, join hands for life with those they have reason to believe are wholly destitute of the fear of God. So great was Rebekah's concern for securing her son Jacob from all temptation to fall in with the idolatrous practices of the heathens, that she says with passionate anxiety, 'If he take a wife of the daughters of Heth, what good shall my life do me *b*?'

But this is not all. As religion on the one part renders a sense of it on the other an indispensable pre-requisite to the mutual happiness of the marriage-state; so prudence teaches that

a 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. *b* Gen. xxvii. 46.

regard should be paid, if circumstances will any way admit of it, to a uniformity of sentiment and practice in the mode of professing it. This advice is the result not of bigotry or attachment to a party, but purely of a wish to preclude every the least occasion of misapprehension and coolness from a relation, wherein the most perfect union is certainly desirable. If however, in some cases, this advice cannot be complied with, good sense and good nature, where these happy qualities are joined with a religious character, will know how to over-rule those inconveniences, which difference of opinion about lesser matters might otherwise render unavoidable. But certainly the apostolic exhortation, to Christians in general, to *be of one accord, and of one mind a*, may with peculiar emphasis be addressed to Christians in the conjugal relation.

And now the only thing to be further observed under this particular of religion, is, that a young person having made up his mind upon the question of the indispensable importance of piety in the object of his choice, ought most devoutly to implore the direction and blessing of divine Providence in this momentous concern. If we are to acknowledge God in all our ways, it is no doubt our duty to acknowledge him particularly in this; and in so doing we may be assured he will direct our steps. The example of the patriarch Abraham, in the prudent and religious attention he paid to the settlement of his son; the faithful and devout manner in which his servant executed the embassy on which he sent him; the regard which the relations of Rebekah shewed to the divine Providence, by acknowledging that *the thing proceeded from the Lord;* and the piety of Isaac when he received her, and led her into her mother's tent, are all circumstances in the Mosaic history well deserving our frequent contemplation *b*. Nor will the contemplation of them fail of affording real entertainment to all those, who have good sense and resolution enough to avow, in the presence of a giddy world, the alliance there is and ought to be between religion and the conjugal relation.

2. *Natural temper* is the next thing to be considered.

To this we give the precedence before the following particulars, because it hath a more immediate and direct influence on

a Phil. ii. 2. *b* Gen. xxiv.

the happiness of the marriage-state than either of them. Good-nature is of importance in all social connections, but more especially in this. It fastens the knot love has tied, and confirms the union friendship has created. It infuses sweetness into all the intercourses of this endearing relation, alleviates the cares and troubles which attend the bringing up a family, and facilitates the various duties of domestic life. Whereas the contrary disposition, especially if it prevails in both parties, draws after it the greatest inconveniencies and miseries, either frequent contentions, or else distance and reserve, and in the end confirmed disgust and hatred. This is a point therefore to be consulted with great attention. How happy where each strives to outvie the other in sweetness of temper and gentleness of manners! These amiable qualities are, however, least to be dispensed with on the side of the woman, since they are generally deemed congenial to that sex, and the want of them deprives them of most of their other charms, and renders them incapable of properly discharging the duties peculiar to their department.

And here we should not forget to observe, that good nature is the proper and immediate attendant on religion. This inspires that, or however has a considerable influence to correct, if not entirely cure, an acrimonious temper: and so it is of great use to assist both husband and wife in the obedience they render to the admonition in our text. Some may affect to think and speak of religion as a severe gloomy kind of business; but the reverse is the case. It does not, in its natural operation, deprive youth of that sprightliness, pleasantry, and agreeableness, which marks that period of life, but tends rather to promote it. For surely this science is the most enlivening and benevolent, as well as improving, that they who are rising into life can possibly be instructed in. And, having drank deep into the spirit of it, how is it possible for a husband, though he were a churl before, to be other than humane and kind! and for a wife, however unhappy her natural temper might be, not to become in a degree soft and yielding! *The former will love his wife even as himself, and the latter will see that she reverence her husband.*

3. *Good sense* was the third particular mentioned.

This, besides the reputation of it, is of no small importance to enable persons, in this relation, to manage their affairs with advantage and success. Indeed there are some occupations and professions in life which require more knowledge, ingenuity, and acquaintance with the world than others. And the domestic concerns of some families are so circumstanced, as to render prudence and attention of greater consequence than in other families. But be our rank and station in life what they may, good sense, if properly used, will avail not a little to secure us from many evils that could not well be otherwise avoided, and to procure us many comforts which would otherwise be foregone. Insomuch that it has been often observed of sagacity on the side of the man, and economy of the woman, that they are of greater account at the setting out of life than a considerable fortune already got to their hands. The good sense of Abigail availed her husband more than any portion he might be supposed to have received with her from her parents. And it was this that gave the finishing hand to the striking portrait the wise man draws of the virtuous woman in the Proverbs.

It should here be further observed, that one grand end proposed by the conjugal relation is, as we have seen, the mutual participation of intellectual pleasures. But, without some good degree of natural understanding, this end is not to be attained. Indeed multitudes have neither ability nor taste for improvements in knowledge; and it is very possible poor, low, grovelling minds, united in this relation, may be susceptible of little pain from ignorance. But where the contrary is the case, how much are the joys of life heightened and improved by frequent intercourses on subjects civil, moral, and religious! And what enlivening pleasures are often felt from the collision of masculine sense on the one side, with a brilliant imagination on the other; especially where the former is free from over-bearing pedantry, and the latter from disgusting affectation! Not to say, likewise, what mighty effect good sense hath to restrain the natural impetuosity of the passions, and to regulate and soften the manners of persons, in this interesting connection, towards each other.

4. As to *Worldly circumstances.*

No doubt it is contrary to all ideas of prudence and humanity, for young people to enter into this relation, without any rea-

sonable prospect of being able to provide for themselves and their families. A step of this sort has often been followed with very unhappy consequences. On the contrary, to forbear forming the marriage connection, purely because there is not such a fortune on either side as will enable a man to support a family independent of business, is a conduct very nearly as censurable as the former. For surely it is the duty of every one who is rising into life to do something towards his own subsistence and that of his offspring, and not to depend entirely on the industry and success of those who have gone before him. His own real interest, and that of society in general, requires it: for slothful inactivity is alike inimical to the one and the other. But, in regulating our views on this matter, regard is to be had to our rank of life, to the kind of education we have had, and to the station we are to fill. And, however an equality of circumstances may in many instances be properly regarded, yet doubtless there are cases wherein this rule may with good reason be dispensed with. Where there is wealth on the one side, there may be considerations sufficient to balance that idea on the other. On the whole, there is a perfect harmony between the counsels of piety and prudence: that of the former is, "Be moderate in thy desires, seek not great things for thyself:" that of the latter, "Let not thy passions, through inconsideration, precipitate thee into all the anxieties of indigence and want." The order in which we have placed the particular now in view makes it yield the palm to religion, good nature, and good sense; and at the same time leaves it not wholly at the mercy of what nevertheless has a just claim to our tender and affectionate esteem, and that is,

5. *External accomplishments.*

Of which I shall only observe, that whether they are the gifts of nature, or the fruit of education, they often make such impression, and very properly too, upon the human heart, as fails not, in connection with the three first particulars mentioned, to unite the affections by a band that nothing but death can dissolve. Yet, ere the passions are captivated, the maxim of the wise man should be well considered, *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised* a.

a Prov. xxxi, 30.

And now two persons connected upon the principles we have presumed to establish, cannot possibly be indisposed to a cheerful compliance with the admonition in our text. Nor need we, after what has been said, take any particular pains either to explain or enforce the duties the apostle here so earnestly recommends. They are all comprehended under the general ideas of *Love*, on the part of the husband; and *Reverence*, on that of the wife.

I. It is the duty of the husband to love his wife. *Let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself.*

And indeed how is it possible that a man should conceive a pleasing idea, not only of the external accomplishments of a woman, but of her understanding, disposition, and piety—so conceive of them as to persuade her, on the grounds of correspondent affections, to join hands with him in this most intimate relation, and not love her? And we may be sure a passion thus kindled in his breast will not languish and die away: it will rise into a steady, inextinguishable flame—a flame which the endearing intercourses of virtuous friendship will daily fan, and the most tempestuous storms of worldly adversity will not be able to put out. Her character he will esteem and honour, her interests civil and religious will lie near his heart, and to her person he will feel a firm and unalterable attachment. Partiality in her favour will ever induce him to place her in such a light as shall secure to her, and of consequence to himself, respect from all his acquaintance and connections: for *the woman is the glory of the man a.* Her health, ease and happiness he will assiduously consult. His anxious attention to business will be excited and softened by the prospect of her sharing with him in all the fruits of his honest labours. *He that is married*, says the apostle, *careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife b.* Amidst the toils of the day he will comfort himself with the hope of enjoying her tender and enlivening discourse in the evening. Her presence, surrounded with her offspring, the dear pledges of their mutual love, will render his own mansion, however plain, far more cheerful and agreeable to him than any other house he may occasionally visit. The anxieties and cares attendant upon her maternal and domestic

a 1 Cor. xi. 7. b 1 Cor. vii. 33.

character, he will in every possible way soothe; and endeavour by a thousand endearing expressions to allay the fears incidental to female tenderness. When she is happy he will be happy; when she is afflicted he will be afflicted with her. To her he will on all occasions unbosom his soul, and *his heart will safely trust in her: and while her children rise up and call her blessed, with great affection and delight he also will praise her* a. If, in fine, a cross accident at any time occasions an hasty sally of the passions, love will quickly repress the heat, and by renewed expressions of tenderness add strength to a friendship which no adverse circumstance can dissolve.—But it were endless to enumerate all the various happy fruits of conjugal affection. Those, however, of a religious kind deserve our particular attention. But the limits of this discourse will allow us only to observe, that the man who has formed this connection with a due regard to the most important of all concerns, will no doubt *dwell with his wife*, as the apostle Peter expresses it, *according to knowledge, as being an heir together with her of the grace of life* b. Love will sweeten their religious counsels and intercourses, and add fervour to their united addresses to Heaven: and so *their prayers*, to use the language of the same apostle, *will not be hindered* c.

But we must not pass on without remarking the very strong terms, by which the text marks the ardency of that affection it requires of the husband towards the wife. 'Let every one of you so love his wife even as himself.' And again, 'Men ought to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it d.' Language this, which, if that latitude were admitted in the conjugal relation which some men have contended for, would lose all, or at least a great deal, of its propriety and force. The relation is very intimate. A man is to leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they twain are to be one flesh. It is not, therefore, general goodwill, or friendly respect only, which this the most endearing of all connections demands. No. Considering her as part of himself—as one with himself, his heart, his soul, his affections

a Prov. xxxi. 11, 28.
b 1 Pet. iii. 7.
c Ibid.
d Ver. 28, 29.

ought to be indissolubly knit to her *a*. So and so only will the salutary ends which divine benevolence has proposed by the marriage institution, be happily and effectually answered.—And now from the man let us turn our attention to the woman.

II. It is the duty of the wife to pay all due honour to her husband. *Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

The reverence here required is not that obsequious slavish kind of submission, which oriental Polygamists haughtily demand of the women of their Haram, who 'are afraid with no small amazement *b*.' But a kind of respect which the piety and good sense of the wife will teach her is due to the rank her husband holds in the creation; and which her good nature, and the tender affection she feels for him, will dispose her to pay him. A tribute not exacted on his part, but cheerfully rendered on hers; he remembering that 'the man is by the woman,' and she that 'the woman was created for the man *c*.' That understanding, sagacity, and knowledge of the world in which the husband, 'who is the head of the woman *d*,' is supposed to excel; and that strength, resolution, and firmness of mind with which Providence has endowed him for the purpose especially of defending the rights and promoting the interests of his family, justly entitle him to her reverence and obedience. She will therefore 'be in subjection to her husband, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord *e*;' and 'submit herself unto him, as unto the Lord *f*,' and 'as it is fit in the Lord *g*.' Nor will he forget that, as it is her duty to yield to his opinion in all those matters especially on which the qualities just mentioned enable him to determine better than her, so there are questions which it will be his interest and prudence to submit to her decision: for the same apostle who has admonished 'wives to submit themselves to their own husbands *h*,'

a "Κρατειν δει τον ανδρα της γυναικος ουχ ως δεσποτην κτηματων, αλλ' ως ψυχην σωματων, συμπαθουντα και συμπνεοντα τη γυναικι. The authority which a husband has over his wife should not be like that of a master over his substance, but like that of the soul over the body, he sympathizing with her, and in benevolence possessing one common nature with her."—PLUT.

b 1 Pet. iii. 6. *c* 1 Cor. xi. 9, 12. *d* Ver. 3.
e 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6. *f* Eph. v. 22. *g* Col. iii. 18.
h Eph. v. 22.

has also exhorted us all 'to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God *a*.'

That reverence then which the text requires, is founded in reason and affection, and will express itself in various ways, which will not fail to contribute greatly to their mutual welfare and happiness. His character for piety, good sense, and prudence, she will on every occasion endeavour to place in such a point of light as to attract the regards of all her acquaintance, and more especially of his children and servants, not affecting to outshine him in any of these excellencies. Fond of viewing him through the flattering, but commendable, medium of conjugal partiality, his virtues will magnify in her tender eye, and his imperfections recede from her view. His temper she will assiduously consult, and by yielding to his will, in instances where conscience is not concerned, she will gain an ascendancy over him, which she will securely enjoy without seeming to possess it. Esteem and affection will be so blended in her breast, that her sweet and respectful demeanour towards him in her house, and among all her connections, will strike every observer as the soft impulse of nature, rather than the result of studied prudence. In short, a reverence thus flowing from love, and expressing itself in instances too numerous to be here recited, will not fail to secure to her in return the tribute of admiration and esteem, as well as affection and delight.

Whether any who called themselves Christians in the early age of the church, were defective in the duty here enjoined, and that might give occasion to the mode of expression used in the text, *Let the wife see that she reverence her husband*, is not for me to say: it is, however, plain, from the general tenor of the apostle's reasoning in this context, that he meant rather to allure each party to their duty by the gentle persuasions of affection and interest, than to impel them to it by the stern dictates of authority.

Having thus explained the duties recommended in our text, we might proceed to enforce them by a great variety of arguments —arguments taken from nature, reason, interest, the good of society, the consent of the wisest and best of men, striking examples held up to our view in the Scriptures, and the positive

a Eph. v. 21.

command of God. But waving these, we shall confine ourselves to that argument on which the apostle so largely and so happily insists in this context, and which is addressed to all the noble passions and generous feelings of a truly Christian heart: I mean, the relation subsisting between our Saviour and his church. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones* a. —Here allow me to descant, a few moments, on the love which Christ bears to his church, and on the duty his church owes, and is sincerely disposed to render to him.

1. As to Christ, how transcendently great is the love he bears to his church!

He, the Son of God, deigned to assume human nature, and, at an expence which angels cannot compute, to espouse the church to himself!—'He gave himself for it.' Hear, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! Corruptible things, such as silver and gold, could not redeem us. A ransom, like that paid for the Israelitish church, even the blood of the first-born of Egypt, was not of sufficient value. Nothing less would avail than his own most precious blood—the blood of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Such was the price justice demanded, such the price love rendered. He was made flesh and tabernacled among us. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; and at length, on a cross, without the gates of Jerusalem, he offered his life a sacrifice for sin. Behold him, Christian, extended on the accursed tree; see the vital blood flowing in

a Eph. v. 22—30.

purple torrents from his wounded heart!—his heart, the seat of love!—of love that passeth knowledge!—so hath he united the church to himself. So is he become *the head of the church, and the Saviour of the body; and we members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* We were unworthy of such an union, and incapable in our depraved state of those exalted joys which result from it. He has, however, provided the necessary means for sanctifying and cleansing us, even the influences of his Spirit, and the instructions of his word. And in due time, having by a thousand expressions of the most endearing affection *nourished and cherished his church, he will present it to himself a glorious church, without imperfection, spot, or blemish.* Thus *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,* the marriage shall be consummated. A voice shall be heard out of heaven, saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God a.*

And now hath Christ thus loved his church?—loved it with a love so free, generous, ardent, and constant? Ought not ye husbands, I mean you more especially who are the friends and disciples of Christ, to imitate his example? Impressed with a deep sense of this unparalleled instance of friendship and benignity, ought not your breasts to glow with an affection towards your wives resembling that which he bears to you? It is an argument addressed to the tenderest feelings of your hearts, it is irresistible.—On the other hand,

2. From the duty which Christians readily acknowledge they owe to the divine Saviour, in return for his love to them, there arises a powerful argument, if such be needful, to persuade the wife to reverence her husband, in return for the love he bears towards her.

Attention, confidence, submission, and obedience, are duties which no doubt Christ may justly challenge of us, since he hath loved us, and redeemed us unto God by his blood. Espoused as we are to him, we are no more our own but his. He is our head, he is our Saviour, and we are one with him. And what is his language to us? It is this, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people,

a Rev. xxi. 2, 3.

and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him *a*.' The reasonableness of all this every individual that composes the church of Christ readily admits; and affection sweetly inclines them to that submission which duty and interest demand of them.

Ought not then the wife, remembering that she holds the same relation to her husband which the church stands in to Christ, to conduct herself towards him in a similar manner? Since he is her friend, her guardian, her head, her self; since he loves her with a tender, prevailing and constant affection; and is willing to endure any hardships and sufferings for her sake; ought she not in return to love him, to repose an entire confidence in him, to pay a respectful deference to his judgment and will in all things, and to submit herself unto him as unto the Lord? She ought. And to this sentiment the heart, as well as the hand, of every virtuous and pious wife will cheerfully subscribe.

To close the whole. It may be presumed from what has been said, indeed it would be an unkind reflection to admit a doubt of it, that all who have drank into the generous and noble spirit of the gospel, whatever may be the temper and demeanour of others, will readily fall in with the duties we have been recommending. In obedience to the mild and gentle authority of Jesus Christ their Saviour and King, as well as to the dictates of their own reason, and the feelings of their own breasts, 'every such husband in particular will so love his wife even as himself, and every such wife will affectionately reverence her husband.'

a Psal. xlv. 10, 11.

DISCOURSE V.

DUTIES OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN.

PROV. XXII. 6.—*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

THE serious attention of parents to the education of their children, is a matter of the greatest importance. The present and future happiness of individuals, the welfare of society in general, and the progress of virtue and religion in the world, do all under God very much depend upon it. This has ever been the opinion of wise and considerate men, and is the plain dictate of the bible. Yet, through various causes too numerous to be mentioned here, this business is wholly neglected by some, and very ill managed by most. Nor can it be enough lamented, that too many, of whom nevertheless we would in charity hope that they fear God, are sadly defective in this point. What we propose therefore is, to explain this duty, and enforce it with suitable arguments. To which purpose we have chosen the words just read.

Solomon was a wise man as well as a great king. He had enjoyed the benefit of a pious education, and the people over whom he reigned reaped no small advantage from the attention paid to him in his early years. To the instructions of his father, it is probable, he owed much of that wisdom with which this book abounds. And with the same assiduity and tenderness he had been himself taught, he teaches others, particularly his children and the youth of the rising generation. To them some of the first chapters are more immediately directed. And, thus deeply impressed with an affectionate concern for their best interests, he admonishes all succeeding parents in our text, to copy after his example. *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

The original words are very expressive. *Train up*, instruct, catechize, or initiate *a child—in the way he should go*, or, in the

beginning of his way, *at the mouth* of it, as soon as he is capable of instruction: or according to his way, that is, according to his capacity: or rather, as some interpret the words, Instruct him in that course or manner of life which thou wouldst have him pursue.—*And when he is old, he will not depart from it*, that is, impressions received in his tender years will remain; having been put in the way he should go, he will not recede or turn aside from it. The meaning is, he will not ordinarily depart from it: for this, as well as all proverbial expressions, is to be understood as admitting of exceptions. Some, no doubt, break over the mounds of education, violently rend every pious and virtuous instruction from their breast, and impetuously precipitate themselves into vice and ruin. But it is not so usually: the advantage of a good education is generally felt all through life to the latest period of it.—In discoursing of this subject we shall,

First, Make some previous general observations respecting education:

Secondly, Point out the duties themselves which parents owe to their children: and,

Thirdly, Enforce these duties with suitable arguments.

First, The previous observations I have to make respect—the *Right* of parents to educate their children—the *Ends* of education—and the several *Stages* through which it extends to the final term of it.

I. As to *the right of parents to educate their children.*

It has often been observed with great truth, that among all the creatures that inhabit our world, none come into it in so helpless a state, and none require the assistance and protection of others for so long a term, as the human species. This is a humiliating consideration. But we may be sure the all-wise and good Creator would not permit it so to be, without providing the necessary means for their conservation and support. This he hath done, and in a way truly admirable. A certain instinct he has implanted in the breasts of parents towards their offspring, which effectually operates to the purpose of securing them all the assistance necessary to their helpless state. Instinct I call it, because it is not the effect of reasoning, but connatural to us, and scarce capable of being eradicated out of our

nature. It is what the Greeks call στοργη, and for which we want a word in our language. This instinct prevails in the breast of the mother in a soft and tender manner, suited to the kind of duty required of her towards her children, in the first and early stage of life. In the father it operates in a different, but like effectual manner. It impels him to the exertion of all his powers, in order to provide a subsistence for his family; and to the best use of that superior sense and judgment he possesses, in order to prepare and qualify them for the stations of life they are to fill.

Now such an instinct being implanted in the breasts of parents—a passion for the welfare of their children which renders them equal to all the anxieties, cares, and labours that attend the painful business of bringing them up into life; there can be no doubt that the right of education lies in them. This is the clear plain voice of nature. To this we have the consent of all mankind *a*. And it is abundantly confirmed by the sentence of Scripture. Any measures taken, therefore, to deprive parents of this right, is a cruel violation of the law of nature. Indeed there is in the general little or no temptation to this evil: for what should induce those who have no immediate interest in children, to bring upon themselves the expence and burden of their education? Things have been, however, so circumstanced in some countries, where superstition and despotism have obtained, that parents, whose religion hath differed from that of the state, have been deprived of the invaluable right of educating their children in their own principles. The time was when bold efforts were used to this end in our country, and when the object was very nearly compassed. But the accession of the present family to the throne of these kingdoms, through the favour of Providence, defeated the attempt. To enter particularly into the reasoning on this subject would carry us too far: it shall suffice, therefore, here to observe, that if God has endued parents with an unconquerable affection for their children,

a The Romans had such a sense of the right of parents over their children, and such a persuasion that natural affection would not suffer them to abuse it, that they even entrusted them with the power of life and death. This Justinian calls, *proprium Civium Romanorum*. The Japanese now allow the same authority to parents.

if this affection extends in the breasts of some of them to their best interests, and if the religion which such parents profess, however really erroneous, is in their opinion true, to forbid them to instruct their children in their own religious principles, is absurd, iniquitous, and cruel to the last degree.

The right of parents to educate their children being thus founded in their competence to this important business, it may be of use to enquire a moment whence it is so many fail in the discharge of this great duty. The true reason is their want either of natural *Affection*, or of *Piety*, or of *Prudence*.

If we could suppose persons destitute of all *Passion* for their offspring, they would no doubt be incapable of bringing them up into life, for they would want the grand motive to stimulate them to exertions indispensably necessary in this important business. But of such monsters, it is to be hoped, there are few in our world. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb* [a]? We see, however, the great use of cherishing in our breasts that affection towards our children which nature has implanted there. This will aid us in our duty, and make us superior to difficulties which would otherwise be insuperable.

The want of *Piety* is another remora in the way of that duty which the text requires of parents. Whatever natural affection men may possess, if they are themselves strangers to religion, they will take little pains to impress a sense of it upon the minds of their children. And hence it is that this, the most important part of education, is so much neglected. Would you then, parents, train up your children in the way they should go? walk in that way yourselves. Let it be your concern to fear God, and keep his commandments, and you will quickly be disposed by your own experience of the sweetness and utility of religion, to use your utmost endeavours, in a dependance upon the grace of God, to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

But there is another obstruction to the right discharge of this duty, which should be particularly noticed; and that is the *Imprudence* and false tenderness of too many otherwise virtuous and good parents. These suffer their parental affection to trans-

[a] Isa. xlix. 15.

port them into an extreme, totally subversive of the very end for which it was implanted in their breasts. Love degenerates into weakness, and a mistaken fondness for their children deprives them of that authority over them, which, duly exercised, would secure respect to themselves, and prove a barrier to them against innumerable evils. "I know not any business," said a wise heathen, "in which a prudent man ought to shew more caution and diligence, than in forming his son's mind to goodness and virtue." To qualify them, therefore, for the right discharge of their duty, such parents should call in the aid of reason and religion, to enable them to controul the irregular efforts of natural affection, and to mingle prudent severity, at proper seasons, with soft indulgence.—Having thus seen where the right of education lies, let us enquire,

II. What is *the proper Object or End of it.*—It is no doubt the real welfare of our children. Now their welfare is to be considered in its reference to this life, and to that which is to come.

1. As to *the present life.*

Mankind differ in their opinions respecting worldly happiness. But whatever opinion men adopt on this head, it will have no small influence on the education they give their children. If, for instance, wealth is a parent's *main* object, to that object he will assiduously direct the attention of his children. He will carefully inure them to habits of courage, application, and perseverance. He will diligently instruct them in the principles and arts of trade and commerce. And he will not fail to lead them into connections that may subserve his lucrative views. But then alas! amidst all these pains to form them for the acquisition of wealth and power, lessons of infinitely greater importance to their real comfort, honour, and usefulness in life, will be over-looked and neglected.

A wise and good parent, however, will not act after this manner. He will indeed, as well as the other, endeavour to inspire his children with sentiments of prudence, resolution, and industry: but then, considering that a man's happiness consists not in the abundance he hath, but depends on the manner in which it is acquired and the use to which it is applied, it will be his main object to impress their minds with sentiments of justice, truth, contentment, temperance, and benevolence. He will

carefully guard them against false maxims of worldly policy. He will prudently check the wild efforts of lawless ambition. He will resolutely bridle their eager love of pleasure. He will seriously forewarn them of the disappointments they may be likely to meet with. And he will take the utmost pains to initiate them in the true secret of worldly felicity, which lies in the suitableness of a man's situation to his natural cast, in the moderate use of temporal enjoyments, in doing good, and in the subservience of his outward circumstances to the more important interests of his soul. In a word, it will be his concern to lead them into such connections, and such only, as will be favourable to these truly just and noble views. And thus, studiously directing their feet into the path Providence has marked out, he will seek real happiness for them, and not the splendid appearance of it.

And now if this reasoning, and this mode of education be right, it is of the last consequence that the minds of parents are well made up upon the great question of the true nature of worldly happiness. Nor will any thing more effectually contribute to this than a thorough acquaintance with religion. Which leads me to speak of education in its reference,

2. To *a future life.*

We believe that there is a world to come, in which the righteous will be happy, and the wicked miserable. Now this idea reflects great importance upon the present life, and consequently upon the duty we are discoursing of. For if men will be dealt with at death according to their proper characters, and if education hath an influence in forming their characters, certainly much depends on it. But this I mention here not as an argument to persuade parents to their duty, (for in this view we shall urge it hereafter) but as a rule to guide them in the conducting this important business. And its use to this end is very great.

If I am firmly persuaded of the truths just mentioned, and have my children's interest at heart; it will be my first and grand object to instil principles of virtue into them, to persuade them of the certainty of a future state, and to instruct them in what I take to be the true and only way of obtaining forgiveness and acceptance with God. Having this great business of their everlasting salvation in full view, I shall so controul my

passions, and so regulate my conduct towards them in regard of their worldly affairs, as to secure them from much real evil, and procure for them much real good. I shall not seek great things for them, or be eagerly desirous of their filling stations of splendour and dignity, well knowing that should they attain these objects, they would be exposed to imminent temptation and danger. I shall be watchful of their connections, not suffering any worldly prospects to draw them into an acquaintance with the despisers of religion, but on the contrary, using my utmost endeavours to allure them into habits of friendship with those who fear God. My instructions, counsels, reproofs, and encouragements, receiving their direction from this great point, will be all likely to have the most salutary effect.

But if we suppose a man an infidel, or at least indifferent about the final state of his children in another world, is it imaginable that he will fulfil the duties of a parent? No, he will fail not only in the most essential matters, but in those too which relate to their temporal welfare. As to instructions of a religious kind, they will be wholly neglected. And more than this, morality itself will be no further regarded than as it may be subservient to their worldly interests. And even here, since wealth and splendour are his only objects, and these are too often acquired by indirect means, he will not be over rigorous in inculcating the duties of truth, justice, and temperance. And thus children led up into life, without any regard to their state in a future world, will be left to the mercy of their depraved passions—passions which have acquired strength from the connivance if not indulgence of such a miserably defective education. Who can forbear bewailing the state of such children, and detesting the conduct of such parents?

And here I cannot pass on without observing, what a strong presumptive argument arises from the light in which we have placed this matter, in favour of the truth of religion. It is agreed on all hands, that morality is of the last importance to the well-being of society. It is likewise acknowledged, that education is of the greatest use to form the morals of youth, and prepare them for the part they are to act on the stage of life. And it further appears from what has been said, that religion, by clearly teaching us wherein our truest interest as to this

world consists, and by holding up to our view our most essential interests in that which is to come, furnishes parents with the most powerful motives to excite them to their duty, and with the best rules to guide them in this important concern. Does it not follow then, that there is the highest presumptive reason from hence to conclude, that religion is not the fruit of idle superstition, but of truth? Annihilate religion, for a moment, in your imagination, and suppose all mankind come to a point upon the question, that there is no future state; what would be the effect? The main fences and barriers of society would be destroyed, and the strongest if not the only incitements to the painful duties of well educating our children, would cease to exist. Education would become a trifling concern. Yea, worse than this, the whole business of it would be, what we see it too often is where religion is held in contempt, a mode of discipline to initiate youth into all the secret mysteries of seduction, fraud, and deceit, and to qualify them for all the open villanies of injustice, violence, and cruelty. Nothing can bear an aspect more favourable to the civil interests of society than religion does: it may therefore very naturally be presumed by him who has not entered into the positive evidence of it, that its origin is divine.—But to proceed.—Our next observations respect,

III. *The Term of education.*

This matter deserves our attention a few moments, as it considerably affects the question before us.—The minority of children is generally understood to extend to twenty-one years. This term may properly enough be divided into three periods, in each of which they are to be considered in a different light, and to be treated after a different manner. During these stages the more immediate care and tuition of them, under the guidance of their parents, will devolve on various sorts of persons.

The *first seven years*, their tender state in regard both of body and mind, naturally throws them into the hands of the mother, and such nurses and servants as she thinks fit to appoint. And though their education, during this period, may on some accounts be deemed less important than afterwards, yet on others it is more so. The like exertions, it is true, in point of understanding, prudence, and resolution, on the part of parents, are

not so requisite in this early stage as when they advance towards maturity. Yet their after-health, improvement in knowledge, and moral character, depend more upon the treatment they receive from these their first guardians, instructors, and managers, than is commonly imagined.

As to their external frame, nature hath endowed the female sex with such tenderness of disposition and warmth of affection, as admirably qualifies them for all the painful, but to them pleasing, duties of nurturing and rearing their young. And no other caution is necessary here, than that they take care they do not carry their indulgence too far, but inure them by degrees to such hardiness as will contribute not a little to the preservation of their health.—With respect to the mind, as the powers of reason gradually open and expand, the prudent attention of the mother will wonderfully aid the first efforts of infant imagination. One little lesson of instruction respecting the objects of sense, will succeed to another; till at length the nature, connection, and use of most things about them, will come to be pretty tolerably understood. The next care of a pious as well as prudent parent will be, to insinuate to their young minds some idea of the greatness and goodness of God, and their obligations to love, obey, and serve him. So she will proceed to inculcate other moral truths and duties on them, which she will do in the softest manner, and by the aid of little stories, and other familiar modes of instruction which her sprightly maternal imagination will suggest. And all this will be accompanied with such sad, but just, complaints of the perverseness and corruption of human nature, such expressions of lively joy on account of the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and such short and fervent prayers with them, as will be apt with the blessing of God to touch their tender hearts, and draw tears from their little eyes. This method of instruction, attended with seasonable checks for what is amiss, and encouragements to what is good, is surely well adapted to the first seven years of life, and will in all probability be followed with the happiest consequences *a*. But I forbear: we mean only general observations here.

a There is a striking and no less pleasing passage in Plato's tenth book *de legibus*, which exactly falls in with our idea of the manner in which children should be treated by their mothers and nurses in their earliest years. Speaking of

The *next seven years*, children fall under the more immediate inspection and government of the father. His authority, knowledge, and experience, qualify him for a kind of exertion which the other sex are not equal to. And their age, capacities, and tempers are so far in advance as to require a more strict though not untender treatment. It will be his business, as a wise and good parent, to raise the superstructure on the foundation the mother has laid; to bring forward the fruit to perfection, the early buds of which she hath tenderly cherished. His attention will be directed to all those particulars of which we shall discourse more largely hereafter, such as their diet, dress, amusement, chastisements, rewards, religious exercises, learning, and the tutors under whom it may be thought proper to place them.

As to the *last seven years*, great prudence and consideration will be requisite on the part of parents to enable them to determine how to dispose of their children, so as to best qualify them for the stations of life they are to fill. Their capacities, inclinations, and views will be consulted. Sober and religious masters will be sought for them, if they are intended for trade and commerce; and able and pious instructors, if they are designed for other and more public professions. A strict regard will be had to their morals. Every possible method will be taken to secure them from the greatest of all evils, bad company; and to associate them with wise, virtuous, and good people. They will be treated, as they advance towards maturity, with a familiarity and confidence suited to their age. Such ap-

persons being trained to pray, he says, "They were induced to become religious by the stories which they heard whilst at the very breast from their nurses and mothers; and by what was told them, as it were in little songs, sometimes pleasantly and sometimes more seriously: as also by the instructions they received from the prayers of their parents, and which instructions were held up to their very eyes in the sacrifices they offered, both which the little ones saw and heard performed with the greatest pleasure, their parents sacrificing with the utmost attention both for themselves and their offspring, and addressing the gods by prayers and supplications as the greatest of all beings." Νην υν τοιθομενοι, τοις μυθοις, ους εκ νεων παιδων ετι εν γαλαξι τριθομενοι, τροφων τε ηκουον και μετερων, οιον εν ασωδαις μετα τε παιδιας και μετα σπουδης λεγομενους, και μετα θυσιων, εν ευχαις αυτους ακουοντες τε, και οψεις ορωντες ποιουμενας αυτους, ας ηδιστα ογε νεος ορα τε και ακουει πραττομενας, θυοντων εν σπουδη τη μεγιστη των αυτων γονεων, υπερ αυτων τε και εκεινων ιερεδακοτων, ους ετι μαλιστα εσι θεοις ευχαις προσδιαλεγομενων και ικετειαις.

pointments they will have as their parents' circumstances will admit of, and the mode of that support will be so adjusted as, on the one hand, to elude all temptation to youthful dissipation; and on the other, to give that generous pleasure to their hearts which may stimulate them to the cheerful discharge of their duty. But the grand object of all will be, to lead them, during this period, upon right principles, into a serious and cordial profession of religion.

Having insisted thus generally on—*the right of parents to educate* their children—*the proper ends of education*—and *the term to which it is to extend;* our way is now open to a more particular consideration of the duties themselves which parents owe to their children. But this must be referred to another opportunity.

PART II.

We have shewn at large, that the *Right* of education is in parents—that the grand *End* of it is their children's welfare in this life and in that which is to come—and that regard is to be had to the several *Stages* through which they pass, till they attain to majority. In the discussion of these previous observations we may have somewhat anticipated our subject: let us proceed however as was proposed,

Secondly, To point out, more particularly, *the Duties* themselves which parents owe to their children.

These duties we shall range under the following heads—*the consulting their capacities—instilling virtuous principles into them—catechizing them—obliging them to attend the worship of God—giving them proper learning*—and *settling them in life.*

I. It is the duty of parents *to consult* attentively *the capacities of their children.*

This point is of great importance: for if it be not duly regarded, it is much if we do not err in every step of our conduct towards them. Now in this general term of *Capacity* I mean to include—their *bodily frame*—their *mental powers*—and their *natural tempers.*

1. As to their *external frame.*

Some children are of a robust, and others of a delicate make. In the former case, plain food so it be wholesome, vigorous

exertions so they do not exceed, and chastisements a little more rigorous than in the latter instance, may be proper. But indulgences, with respect to each of these particulars, should be allowed children of a tender constitution. If a stout hale child is pampered with the delicacies of life, purely for the sake of gratifying his appetite, excused of this or that exercise lest it should give him pain, and for the same reason allowed to escape punishment when he has richly deserved it, both his health and his morals will suffer. How many children have been ruined through the imprudent management of indulgent mothers! On the other hand, to treat children of weak spirits and a sickly habit with roughness, not at all consulting their ease, inclinations, and wishes, is equally hurtful and unnatural. Asperity towards such little creatures, who ought rather to be fostered in the arms of pity and indulgence, has in some cases borne down their feeble frames, or however so broke their spirits that they have not been able to lift up their heads ever after. Their constitutions therefore should be consulted, and our conduct regulated thereby.

Attention too should be paid to their external form. It sometimes so happens, that the plainness and deformity of one child shall expose it to slights and neglects, while the beauty and comeliness of another shall secure to it excessive fondness and partiality. An evil this of no small account, since it tends to baulk and discourage the former, and to cherish the seeds of vanity and insolence in the latter. Against this pernicious conduct a prudent parent will be on his guard, and rather balance the account between children thus differently circumstanced by the opposite treatment of them. But the ill effect which a too early idea of their own external accomplishments is apt to produce in young people, demands the particular regard of those to whom their education is entrusted. It may not be possible wholly to conceal from their knowledge those advantages with which nature may have endowed them above others: but certainly a jealous eye should be kept upon them, and every prudent measure taken to check a kind of vanity, which will in a thousand ways prejudice both their civil and religious interests.

2. As to their *intellectual capacities.*

In this particular there is perhaps a much greater diversity among children than in the former. And the want of discernment in parents upon this head, has often proved the occasion of many unhappy solecisms in the business of education. A child of slow understanding and weak abilities, shall be destined to a superior profession of life, for which he has no taste, and in which it is impossible for him to excel; and in his way to it, contrary to all sense and reason, he shall be condemned to a long course of discipline the most severe and humiliating: while another, possessed of shining talents and an unconquerable thirst for literature, shall have his views crossed, his pursuits checked, and at length be thrust into a station of life, wherein his whole object is to be the getting a maintenance, or at most the gaining a little sordid wealth. How preposterous this!

To avoid such mistakes we should consider well our children's natural abilities, and call in the assistance of others, if needful, to that end. The powers of nature, like the plants in our gardens, gradually open, and by diligently watching their progress, an employment not a little pleasing to a fond parent, we shall quickly discern what kind of culture is the fittest for them, and give a good guess to what use they may be best applied when they arrive at maturity. By various ways we may come at an idea of the particular talent or endowment which marks their mental character, whether it be imagination or judgment, ingenuity or sagacity, memory or invention, study or action; and to the prevailing cast of their minds we should accommodate our instructions and modes of education. This will greatly facilitate both our business and theirs. Thus gently leading them forward in the path nature hath pointed out for them, we shall with the blessing of God successfully conduct them to the object of our wish—that station of life which Providence has designed them for. Again,

3. We should well study their *tempers*.

This is of the last consequence to the forming the morals of children, of which we are to speak more particularly under the next head. In the mean while it must be observed, that human nature is in the general alike in all, and that the propensities and passions of mankind are each of them vitiated and depraved. But then it is as certain, that one passion usually predominates; and it is this that marks the characters of men, and

distinguishes them from one another in the public walk of life. Hence we say of one that he is proud, and of another that he is humble, that is, they are comparatively so, humility in the former instance, and pride in the latter, not being the predominant passion. In like manner we say of one that he is hot and passionate, and of another that he is meek and gentle: of one that he is obstinate and tenacious, and of another that he is soft and flexible: of one that he is reserved and gloomy, and of another that he is frank and open: in fine, of this person that he is covetous and selfish, and of that that he is liberal and benevolent.

Now as the seeds of all these passions are in children, and as it is true of them as well as of grown persons, that one prevails more than the rest, and so forms a diversity of character among them: as this, I say, is the case, it is the duty of parents to use their endeavours to find out what is the predominant passion. And indeed this may be done, in most cases, without much difficulty. But a few years will pass over their heads, before we shall discover what vice they are most prone to. Now to that vicious temper our attention, reproofs, counsels, and restraints should be chiefly directed. With this object in our eye we shall be better enabled to guide the whole tenor of our conduct towards them. This will meet our severe reprehension, when perhaps we shall judge it prudent to overlook some other inadvertencies, or sallies of ill-temper: and every appearance of resistance on their part to this predominant passion, will meet our warm approbation and praise. In short, this clear discernment of their particular disposition, will have a material and happy effect upon a prodigious variety of particulars in our treatment of them, too numerous to be here recited. Study then well, parents, your children's natural tempers.—This leads us to the second head of advice,

II. It should be the care of parents *to instil virtuous principles into their children.*

By virtuous principles I mean such practical notions or maxims of conduct, respecting truth, justice, temperance, modesty, benevolence, and the like, as are acknowledged on all hands to be of the greatest importance to the well-being of society. Now the question to be discussed here is, How these notions or maxims are to be instilled into children?

In general, the measures we take with them to this end, should be adapted to their age, capacities, and particular turn of mind. We should begin with their perceptions, not too hastily reasoning with them before they are capable of laying propositions together, and inferring from them. Plain, simple ideas should in the first instance be held up to their view, so they will quickly come to know what we mean by ill-humour and good-nature, falsehood and truth, pride and humility, cowardice and courage, impudence and modesty, and the like: and our opinion respecting these they will quickly perceive, by our countenance and manner as well as language. When reason begins to expand, the true grounds of these virtues and opposite vices should be explained to them, the real excellence and use of the former, and the wretched deformity and evil of the latter: the notice God takes of these matters, and his displeasure at the one, and approbation of the other. And there are a thousand ways of impressing these ideas on their minds, such as by occasional hints, stories contrived to amuse their fancy and strike their passions, the harmony of poetic numbers, and particularly the historical relations of the Bible *a*. Here give me leave to recommend two lessons of great importance to be inculcated on young people, namely, *Self-command* and *Punctuality to engagements.*

But instructions will be of little use unless reduced to practice. A strict attention therefore is to be paid to their words and actions. Every conformity, and every aim to conform to what is right, should be rewarded. And every departure from what is right, if wilful and obstinate, should be punished. Great prudence, however, is necessary to regulate this business of rewards and punishments, in regard of the kinds, degrees, and seasons of them. An open, ingenuous, manly temper should be cherished as much as possible, and rewards and punishments

a Xenophon tells us, "the Persian children went to school, and spent their time in learning the principles of justice, as children in other countries do to gain the knowledge of letters. Their governors devoted the greatest part of the day to the deciding causes among them, respecting theft, violence, and deceit; punishing those whom they found guilty in any of these matters, or who were convicted of unjust accusation. Ingratitude too, they punished, a crime, which though the principal occasion of animosity, is little taken notice of among men."

XENOPH. *Cyro-paed.* lib. I.

accommodated to it. Corporal penalties and indulgences may on some particular occasions be necessary, but if they exceed, are ill-timed, and too often repeated, they will produce a contrary effect to what is intended; they will harden, not meliorate. *Ye fathers*, says the apostle to the Ephesians, *provoke not your children to wrath* a. "Be not severe, over-bearing, and tyrannical in your behaviour towards your children, lest you rouse their angry passions, and excite in them such resentments against you, as may occasion indecent expressions, and prejudice them against the religion you profess. But on the contrary, be mild and gentle in your treatment of them, and never have recourse to rigorous measures, until the necessity of the case require it. And even then, let your passsions first subside, before you proceed to the painful business of chastising them."

Great care also should be taken as to the company they keep, and the masters and tutors to whom their education is entrusted. To forbid their forming connections with persons of their own age, would be unnatural. But as bad habits are insensibly contracted by an intimacy with ill-bred and disorderly children, and the reverse is the case by frequent intercourses with those of good principles and manners; the former should be studiously avoided, and the latter industriously sought. The good character too of servants, with whom children must of necessity frequently converse, is of great importance to their morals. David's resolution not to suffer a liar or a deceitful person to dwell under his roof, was as prudent as it was pious. But this object, in regard of masters and tutors, is of essential consequence. Their professional qualifications, be they ever so considerable, will by no means balance the account against any defect here. How can that parent be supposed to have his children's interest at heart, who, with his eyes open, commits them to the care of those who are void of all principle and decency?

The kind of books, likewise, which children are permitted to read for their amusement, is a subject deserving our notice. The wretched trash of plays, novels, and romances with which the world is overrun, hath done infinite mischief to the morals of young people. It hath corrupted the principles, enflamed the imagination, and vitiated the taste of thousands. With

a Eph. vi. 4.

books of this sort a prudent parent will not suffer the closets of his children to be disgraced. Nor yet, under the pretence of taking care of their morals, will he interdict the innocent pleasures of imagination. In the well-selected writings of poets, historians, and natural philosophers, he will find a fund of entertainment for their leisure hours: and to the acquaintance of these friends of taste and cheerfulness, as well as of intellectual and moral improvement, he will gladly introduce them.

I have only one thing more to recommend to parents, under this head, and that is, the exhibiting to their children, in their own temper and conduct, a fair and bright portrait of those virtues to which by their instructions they endeavour to attract their attention. The duties of morality, when beheld by the youthful eye through the pleasing mirror of their example, whom natural affection hath taught them to revere and love, will be apt to make a deep impression on the heart. And those must be very depraved children indeed, who whilst they carry their parents' image in their countenances, can take pains to persuade the world, that they bear no affinity to them in their nobler part.

III. The duty of *catechizing our children* comes next to be considered.

Under the former head, our attention was wholly confined to those instructions which respect their moral conduct. But our views certainly ought to extend further—to *Religion.* There is, indeed, an intimate connection between religion and morality: he who possesses the former cannot be destitute of the latter, for what is religion without morals? But it is possible a man may in the general be sober, honest, good-natured, and yet be a stranger to real piety. A variety of motives may operate to give a decent and respectable cast to a person's external deportment, who yet pays not an ingenuous, cordial regard to the authority of God.

Now religion is the most important concern in the whole world; it essentially affects our present comfort and usefulness, and our future and everlasting happiness. But religion is founded in knowledge; for as God is the grand object of it, there must be some idea of him and his will, previous to the ex-

ercise of suitable affections towards him. This knowledge is communicated by the two mediums of his works and word. To these, therefore, the eye of the mind must be directed, in order to the heart's being duly impressed and influenced thereby. It is true indeed, there may be a speculative knowledge of God without any salutary effect resulting from it: yet it is as true, that those affections which constitute a religious character, cannot exist where there is no speculative knowledge of God. Since therefore there can be no religion without knowledge, and since we have the means of knowledge, it is our unquestionable duty to use those means ourselves, and to recommend the use of them to others. And upon this ground stands the obligation of parents to catechize their children.

But here it will be said, "There are other supposed revelations of the will of God besides the Bible, and they too who rereceive the Bible, are divided in their opinions concerning the sense of it. Is it then the duty of Mahometans, Jews, Romanists, and the various denominations of reformed Christians to catechize their children, agreeably to their own symbols or creeds?" Most certainly. How is it possible for me to possess a book, which I believe to be of divine authority, to affix what I apprehend to be the true idea to the contents of it, and to be persuaded that the knowledge thereof is of essential moment to my happiness here and hereafter: and not feel myself obliged to instruct my children, whom I love as my life, in these important matters? If it be said, "Then the most erroneous religions may be propagated in the world:" all the reply I have to make is, "Great is the truth, and it will prevail." Let it stand on its own proper ground, without the unnatural and foreign aid of worldly penalties on the one hand, or worldly emoluments on the other, and he who is attached to it upon right principles, will not be in pain about the event.

But there are three objections yet in the way of catechizing children, which must be removed, or the duty will be still neglected. They arise from three quarters, and those too of very different descriptions. Some object, "It prejudices free enquiry."—Others, "It is taking God's work out of his hand into our own."—And the rest, "It hath been so long neglected we know not how to set about it."

It is acknowledged that the prejudices of education are very strong, and that sentiments imbibed from their parents in early life, children are too apt to take for granted, without thoroughly enquiring into them. But if this proves any thing to the purpose of the objector, it proves too much. It proves that they are to be taught nothing about which mankind are divided, and so are to be held in total ignorance of the first principles of all science, and of morality too as well as religion. Some points, indeed, in religion men are more divided about than others. But if a parent has made up his mind upon those points, and believes them to be of the last importance to his own happiness here and hereafter; how is it possible for him, as I said before, to feel the affection of a parent, and to conceal the knowledge of these matters from his children? It is a dictate of nature, that he should be explicit and earnest with them. Common sense, indeed, will teach him to begin with truths that are self-evident, and so to proceed by degrees to those which require further investigation, according as their capacities will admit. And it will be his unquestionable duty, to lay before them the grounds and reasons of every point in religion he holds up to their view, and to persuade them to attend diligently to the evidence, insisting that implicit faith will be of little avail, that their receiving this or that truth merely on his authority will have only a partial if not ill effect, and that to believe rightly is to believe on evidence—evidence that shall clearly appear to themselves to be of divine authority. And if children, thus instructed, will suffer prejudices in favour of their parents' religion to shut up every avenue to enquiry, and to preclude all further information and conviction, the fault is their own.

But there are others who tell us, that "the catechizing children is a fruitless business, if not a bold invasion on the province of the Holy Spirit." It is his office, say they, to enlighten the understanding, and renew the heart; and the work ought not to be taken out of his hand. But it is true of this objection, as well as of the former, that if it proves any thing it proves too much. For, by a parity of reason, that influence which pervades through the creation, and without which the labours of the husbandman would be fruitless, might be urged as an argument to justify a total cessation from ploughing and sowing, and all the

business of agriculture and gardening. The grace of God, it is true, is necessary to renew the heart. But this grace is exerted in a manner perfectly agreeable with our frame and construction as reasonable creatures. We have the means of divine knowledge, the Scriptures, and we are required to read, consider, and search them: and in such use of our Bibles we may hope to receive divine illumination. But, because without such illumination our study of them will be vain and fruitless, are we justified in wholly neglecting the use of them? Upon this principle preaching, and every other mode of instruction, might be interdicted. But it is a fact which the experience of many ages has taught, that a serious attention on the part of parents to the duty we are recommending, has often been accompanied with the most salutary advantage to their children. The Israelites received a particular charge from Moses respecting this matter *a*, and Timothy had reason to bless God as long as he lived for the pious instructions of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice *b*. And it is also to be observed of those children of religious parents who, having forsook the path of virtue in their youth, are yet afterwards reclaimed and converted; that their former speculative acquaintance with the truths of Christianity is of no small use to them: whilst others who have not enjoyed the advantage of early instruction, when they become serious, stand in need of being instructed in the first principles of the oracles of God.

As to the last objection, "We know not how to set about it." I need say no more to it than that it is to be feared whatever men's pretences may be, it results from the want of a firm persuasion of the truth of that religion they profess. Believe your religion, Sirs, feel it, enter into the spirit of it, and then withhold the knowledge of it from your children if you can. Once disposed to your duty, you will not be long at a loss how to perform it.

And now from what has been said in vindication of this duty, the nature of it may in general be collected. We shall however add three or four important remarks concerning it, without enlarging on them.—The memories of children should not be overburthened, lest this service, which ought to be rendered agreeable to them, become tedious and irksome.—What they

a Deut. xi. 18—21. *b* 2 Tim. i. 5. iii. 15.

are taught should be as fully and clearly explained to them as possible.—The divine authority should be brought home to every article of instruction.—And their various degrees of importance should be particularly pointed out to them. From all which it appears that great discretion, as well as zeal and attention, is necessary to qualify parents for the right discharge of this duty.—We proceed now to the next duty to be urged on parents, and that is,

IV. The *alluring children to a cheerful attendance on divine worship.*

We have dwelt so long upon the former head, and so many particulars have been thrown out on this in a preceding discourse, that a few words will suffice here.—In the phrase of *divine worship* I include the duties of private, family, and public devotion. The obligations of men in general to these duties, must at present be taken for granted. The question here is, How children are to be initiated into them?

As to private prayer, morning and evening, they should be early taught the reasonableness and importance of it. In their younger days it may be proper to assist them with plain, short, expressive forms, suited to their ages and capacities, of which we have some very admirable ones in our language. But the main thing is to make them sensible of their wants, and of their dependance upon the providence and grace of God for the supply of them. These sentiments deeply impressed upon their hearts will have a mighty effect to impel them to their duty. The reading the word of God too should be earnestly inculcated. And their other exercises and amusements should be so arranged, as that they may have opportunity for retirement at the proposed seasons: while at the same time they are instructed, that that worship which is acceptable to God, must be free and cordial, not the fruit of compulsion; humble and modest, not the result of shew and ostentation.

As to family and public worship, we have discoursed largely of these duties on a former occasion: we shall here therefore only add, that children should be required to attend regularly and seriously upon them, and that these services should be so conducted as to render them as little tedious as possible. But I must not omit mentioning again in this place the vast impor-

tance of praying frequently and earnestly with them, for the blessing of God on all our instructions and counsels; and of setting them examples, by our daily tempers and conduct, of genuine virtue and of cheerful and unaffected piety.

V. It is the duty of parents *to give their children learning.*

By *learning* here I mean such instruction in the arts and sciences as is suited to the capacity and genius of a child, and to the station of life he is to fill. This is a subject which well deserves particular discussion. But as the consideration of it would carry us too far, and may likewise be deemed improper in a discourse which hath religion for its grand object, we will content ourselves with referring parents to those authors who have written the most ably on this point *a*. It now then only remains,

VI. And lastly, that we offer some observations on the duty of parents respecting *the settlement of their children in life.*

The period to which we have conducted children, and in which we are now to view them, is the most critical and important in all their lives. They are just passing from minority to majority. Puerility yields to judgment, and fancy to consideration: yet with the understanding which youth possess there is usually, through inexperience, a mixture of vanity and conceit, which is, however, often balanced with great frankness and generosity of temper. The passions now acquire their full strength. A thousand objects address their senses, and various pleasing and enchanting prospects open to their view. And such being their character they are exposed to many dangers, and a false step at this period may be followed with the most fatal consequences. In short every thing, under God, depends upon the turn they now take, and the course they now pursue. This is the time, therefore, of all others in which parents should summon together their utmost prudence, good-nature, resolution, and piety, in order to the guiding them into that path which they will probably pursue to the end of their lives. Now three things are particularly deserving the attention of parents at this season, the conciliating to themselves their children's cordial affections, the asserting properly their au-

a Milton's Tractate of Education. Locke on Education. Watts's Improvement of the Mind. The Preceptor, printed for Dodsley, &c. &c.

thority over them, and the endeavouring to moderate their own lucrative and their children's ambitious views.

Ingenuous children may be supposed, when thus rising into life, to feel a grateful sense of the obligations they owe to their parents for a thousand expressions of tenderness and love towards them during their minority, which will scarce fail to secure to them the most kind and gentle treatment in return. But it sometimes so happens that the jealous eye which parents keep on their own authority, now their children are just becoming their own masters; the painful apprehensions they feel for their safety, now they are just launching into the world; and perhaps some degree of acrimony in their temper; all unite to create such a distance and reserve in their behaviour, as tends to diminish their children's reverence and affection. But this should be carefully guarded against *a*. It is an evil that will be more poignantly felt now than formerly. We cannot take too much pains, therefore, to convince them that we most tenderly love them, and that their honour and happiness both in this world and another lie very near our hearts. Nor can we carry ourselves towards them with too much familiarity, indulgence, and confidence, provided we do not suffer ourselves to sink into contempt in their eye. Thus taking every possible measure to render ourselves agreeable to them, they will feel themselves warmly attached to us, will never be so happy as when in our company, and will not act without our advice and consent in any important matter.

But, however the mode of governing them may and ought to change with their age, parents should yet preserve their authority over them; and that not for their own sakes only but theirs also. If indeed this has not been asserted in their minority, it will be a vain attempt to assume it now. In such case parents will not have courage to claim their own right, and children will be too violent and headstrong to yield it: and of consequence both will be the sufferers, and in all probability sufferers to a very great degree. To this point, therefore, great attention

a ——— errat longe, mea quidem sententia,
Qui imperium credat esse gravius aut stabilius
Vi quod sit, quam illud quod amicitia adjungitur.
TER. *Adelph.* Act I. Sc. I.

should be paid. Nor will prudent parents, who have well conducted the business of education hitherto, be at a loss here. Providence having put the means of authority into their hands, they will let their children know that they possess them, and that they know how to apply them to the purposes for which they were entrusted with them.

The other matter we mentioned is also of great consequence, I mean, the using our utmost endeavours, at this important period particularly, to moderate our own and our children's passion for the world. The passions indeed of elder and younger people, in regard of the world, express themselves differently: wealth is too often the object of the former, and pleasure and honour of the latter. But if parents will discharge their duty properly to their children at this time, they must take pains to bring their own views as to the acquisition of wealth within moderate bounds, and to check the eager and ambitious desires of their children. The seeking great things has, in some instances, proved the occasion of losing every thing. It is unpardonable in parents to tempt their children with prospects, to which Providence hath not directed their views: and it is a great sin and folly in children not to listen attentively to those lessons of moderation which their parents teach them.

And now, deeply impressed with these sentiments, there are three objects which should particularly engross the attention of parents respecting their children—*company*—*business*—and *alliances in marriage*. As to the first, the leading them into a strict intimacy with wise, virtuous, and good young people, and giving such persons, at their invitation, a hearty welcome to our houses, will have a very great effect. It will keep them out of the way of temptation, and contribute at once both to their improvement and happiness. As to business, their particular occupations or professions in life have been already chosen, and the matter now is to find out fit situations for their carrying on the one, or their exercising the other. In the choice of these the object should be, not only their worldly success, but the securing them from snares of various kinds, too numerous to be mentioned here. Our diligent watch, counsel, and assistance they will daily need, and these parental anxiety and affection will not fail to afford. And then, as to alliances they may con-

tract in marriage, upon which one circumstance their future prospects of happiness and usefulness will chiefly depend, it will be our duty to exert all our prudence, influence, and abilities on their behalf. But on this subject I forbear to enlarge here, as it hath been particularly discussed in a former discourse *a*.

To close the whole. In the discharge of all these duties, permit me once more to remind you, parents, that your children's everlasting welfare should be your grand object, and should overrule every other consideration whatever. And thus endeavouring faithfully to fulfil your duty towards them, and earnestly commending them to the protection and favour of a good God, your Father and their Father, you may hope yourselves to see them happy and useful in life; and having had your dying eyes closed with their dutiful and tender hands, to meet them another day in heaven, amidst the transporting joys and triumphs of that blissful state.

PART III.

THE duties which parents owe to their children having been stated and explained, we proceed now,

THIRDLY, To offer some suitable arguments to persuade parents to the faithful discharge of these duties.

There is, indeed, something very humiliating in the idea of parents being persuaded to take care of their children. What!—Can it be necessary to persuade men to that which it should be impossible for almost any force to restrain them from doing? Yes, it is necessary. The shameful neglects, in regard of the education of children, too visible in this country, and among some who claim the character of virtuous and religious people, justify the assertion. It is a national evil. The baneful effects of it are already felt, and will be in a still greater degree, if a reformation does not speedily take place. Every exertion, therefore, is needful on our parts to rouse men from their slumber, and to excite them to a duty, which *the Welfare of their Children*—*the Interests of Civil Society*—and *the Progress of Religion* in the world, demand at their hands. These are the topics on which we mean to enlarge: and may God command his blessing on the attempt!

a DISC. IV. PART II.

I. The *Welfare of our children* calls loudly upon us to take all the care we can of their education.

This is an argument addressed to natural affection, under the guidance of reason and religion: and parents of this description cannot avoid feeling the force of it. If a man is destitute of all affection to his offspring, he is a monster; and though in a human shape, to be beheld with abhorrence. If he hath affection for his children, but the expressions of that affection are *wholly* confined to their animal nature, he is not indeed a monster, but he must not be called a reasonable being: his proper denomination is that of a brute. If his affection extends further than merely to their animal nature, and his object is their advancement in civil society, he is above a brute, and may be styled a man of sense: but their most important interests having no share in his concern, he cannot be deemed a man of religion. Now it is with parents, as men of *humanity*, *good sense*, and *piety*, we are here reasoning. To your view, Sirs, considered in each of these lights, we would hold up the great object of your children's welfare.

To your *humanity*, in the first place, we would commend the care of your children's persons, I mean their animal nature. Here we have no occasion to persuade. Natural affection is instinct. It operates without reasoning. Its force is irresistible. Your children are part of yourselves: you feel they are *a*. Your image they carry in their countenances. To you helpless they look up for support. To your arms defenceless they fly for protection. Around you they cling as their guardians and friends. You cannot suppress emotions of tenderness and love towards them. You cannot cast off bowels of compassion for them. You cannot thrust them from your hearts, while they smile in your faces. You cannot shut your ears against their cries, while they implore your aid. No. Humanity forbids it. The idea of their suffering want, poverty, and wretchedness, makes you miserable, harrows up your very soul. Every nerve you would exert to procure them subsistence, and leave no effort untried to rescue them from destruction.

But to you also they look up, or we for them, as to men of *understanding* and *prudence*: to make what provision you can

a Quid dulcius hominum generi a natura datum est quam sui cuique liberi.
CICERO.

for their escaping temporal misery, when they grow up into life, and their obtaining a degree at least of temporal happiness. You have knowledge of the world. You have experience. You know beforehand the dangers of various kinds to which they will be exposed, and the exertions that are necessary in various ways, in order to procure a competency of wealth, honour, and felicity. You dread the thought of their sinking into poverty, and being treated with contempt. And though it is not your object to raise them to the summit of worldly splendour and glory, yet you would gladly introduce them into situations that may render them easy, respectable, and useful. But how is this to be done? He who has possessed you of parental affection, has also endowed you with reason to direct to the proper means for the gratifying that affection. And what are those means, but the giving them a prudent and virtuous education. A good education is better than an ample fortune. How can you expect that they should be successful in life, if not prepared for the stations they are to fill by suitable instruction? And, though successful, how can you expect that they should be happy and useful, if principles of integrity, industry, sobriety, moderation, and benevolence are not instilled into them? To neglect their education, therefore, or to suffer them to grow up rude and undisciplined, without laying a proper restraint upon their passions, is to offer violence to natural affection, or at least to fix an indelible blot upon your character in point of prudence and good sense. "We ought not to have children," says a wise heathen, "if we will not be at pains to train and educate them *a*."

But the object which most of all demands your attention, is *the salvation of their immortal souls.* You believe there is a God, that there is a difference between good and evil, that men cannot be happy in this life if they do not approve the former and shun the latter, that religion is the noblest source of real pleasure, that though your children were possessed of all that this world can afford, without an interest in the favour of God they would be miserable, that they must die, that they are amenable at the divine tribunal, that their souls are immortal, and

a Η γαρ α χρη ποιειν παιδας, η ξυνδιαπαλλαττειν και τρεφειν και παιδευειν.
PLAT. CRITO.

that, unless they believe in Christ, and are his genuine disciples, they are undone for ever. You believe, I say, these great truths, or however you profess to believe them. How can you then love your children, and, having the least share of common sense, not feel yourselves impelled by an irresistible kind of necessity to hold up to their view these truths, with all the evidence that accompanies them; and to press upon them their importance, with tears of anxiety and earnestness? If you do not believe them, that indeed will account for your neglect. But if you do, and yet neglect to inculcate them, yours is the most absurd character in the world. Give your children a religious education, or say in so many words that you have no religion yourselves, and that you hold it all in contempt. Do justice to your own principles and to them, or be content to be called what you really are, either infidels or fools. How can you have natural affection!—how can you have parental tenderness!—how can you feel these dear parts of yourselves twine about your hearts!—and be reconciled to the agonizing sight of viewing them plunged in the depths of vice and sin, going down to death and the grave under the weight of accumulated guilt, and suffering the wrath of God in all its tremendous forms in the world to come? What if, on the last solemn day of account, your injured children should thus address their Judge, in the presence of that great assembly!—"True, my guilt is great, but it had not been so great, if my parents had discharged their duty towards me. To their neglects and indulgences I owe my ruin. They told me nothing about God, and Christ, and another world. They did not inform my mind, awaken my conscience, and restrain my passions. They did not pray with me or for me. They took no care about my salvation. All their concern was for my worldly prosperity, let what would become of my immortal soul. Ah! you, you unnatural parents, are the authors of these my miseries." How will ye endure, Sirs, such reproaches as these?

But in order to do justice to this argument, taken from the concern we feel for the welfare of our children, we must detain your attention a little longer, while we paint, in two opposite instances, the direful effects of want of education on the one hand; and the happy effects of a good education on the other. In the mean while it will be proper to observe, that there are,

no doubt, many instances of those who, through the extraordinary interposition of divine grace, have surmounted the evils resulting from the want of this inestimable blessing. The tender bowels of their heavenly Father have more than compensated the brutality of their natural parents. And it should also be further observed, that the best education parents can possibly give their children, sometimes fails of the desired end, and is indeed never successful without the concurrence of a superior influence. It is the voice, however, of reason and the Bible, that the means God has appointed be used: and woe be to them who dare wilfully to neglect them!

But to return. The miserable effects of an ill-education might be shewn in many sad instances; one, however, shall suffice as a sample of the rest. The unhappy person to whom I refer, was the son of parents in good but not very affluent circumstances, of easy indulgent dispositions, not without a share of common sense, and generally considered as people of religion. Their son, to all appearance, they tenderly loved. Whilst young and under the management of his mother, the business was to gratify him with whatever he asked for, and not to suffer him to be crossed in any particular. As he grew, his depraved passions which had received little or no check, gathered strength; and so blind were his parents as to account them, or at least to speak of them, in the light of virtues rather than vices. Pride was, in their eye, spirit; ill-humour, manly resolution; art, good sense; and pertness, wit. The authority which they ought to have exercised over him, he claimed over them; and *his* will, instead of *theirs*, was law. The masters who were to instruct him, received particular charge not to be severe with him, and to excuse him of exercises required of other children, his tender health not admitting of such exertions. Improvement in knowledge was referred to riper years, and indulgence thought to be the best means to establish his constitution, and attach his affection to themselves. Averse to all thought about religion, he was not to be pressed on those matters, lest he should conceive an unconquerable prejudice against it. Catechising was drudgery, and he would come by and by to understand the principles of religion in a more rational and easy way. Public worship was not, indeed, to be wholly neglected, but a con-

stant attendance on it was to be dispensed with, lest he should grow sick of these tedious services. Family worship was but now and then observed, and his presence not absolutely necessary. Companions he must have, and these of such a sort as suited his humour, provided they were not the vulgar, and openly profane. A profession in life was thought of for him, but the usual discipline to qualify him for it deemed unnecessary, as he would be likely to possess a competency without excelling in his profession. As he grew towards man's estate, gratifications in this and that way were but natural to youth, and his desires, which gradually became demands, must be complied with.

His passions now acquire strength. Conceit, ambition, and pleasure mark every step he takes. With difficulty he is to be restrained from open acts of indecency and vice. His parents at length begin to see their mistake, and, like old Eli, they feebly chide him, saying, *My son, why do you so?* Inattention to their admonitions ripens into unnatural indifference to their persons, and utter contempt of their authority. Into the world he violently precipitates himself, throwing the reins upon the neck of his lawless passions, resolving he will have his full swing of carnal mirth and pleasure. They, overwhelmed with anxiety and distress, follow him with their earnest cries, tears, and entreaties, but all in vain they tell him now of God, his soul, death, and a future judgment. He has made up his mind to infidelity. He laughs at religion, and at their weakness to profess it, scarcely believing from their treatment of him, that they can be supposed themselves really to believe it. From one step he proceeds to another, till at length having reduced himself to poverty and want, broken the hearts of his parents, and emaciated his constitution, he lies down and dies, amidst the horrors of an awakened conscience and the tremendous apprehensions of future misery; with his last breath cursing the authors under God of his being, for their having by their neglect and indulgence devoted him to destruction.

Can we behold such a scene, and our hearts not bleed within us? Can we look, parents, upon our children, and apprehend it possible that, through the depravity of human nature and our neglect of their education, the like event may happen respecting

any of them, and not tremble? Let natural affection collect its full strength, and from our own tenderest feelings, under the guidance of reason and religion, let us reply to this question, Whether we ought not to exert our utmost efforts, in a dependance on the grace of God, *to train up our children in the way they should go?* But as the horror we conceive from the distant apprehension of their future wretchedness, may be supposed to rouse us to action; so the transporting pleasure we feel from an idea of the honour and happiness they may attain to in this world and another, cannot fail, methinks, sweetly to allure us to our duty. To this object, therefore, let me now lead your attention, in an instance directly opposed to that we have described.

The parents of him, whose story we have to relate, were plain, sensible, good people; in a situation beneath envy and above contempt. Their child they dearly loved, and they had no sooner received this pledge of their mutual affection at the hands of Providence, than they began to grow jealous of themselves, lest their tenderness for him should prove an obstruction to the right discharge of their duty to him. With tears, therefore, of unfeigned piety they besought God to enable them to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. His engaging temper quickly won upon their hearts, but at the same time they clearly perceived he was not destitute of those depraved passions they felt in themselves, and daily lamented before God. The restraining and conquering them was the first object of their attention, while they endeavoured, by the most soft and insinuating address, to impress upon his imagination and heart sentiments favourable to virtue and religion. They sternly frowned on every effort of pride, stubbornness, and malevolence; and as tenderly cherished every expression of modesty, gentleness, and good-nature. They established their authority over him by firmly insisting, under pain of their severest displeasure on an unreserved obedience to their commands: and his affections they attached to themselves by every possible mark of parental fondness and familiarity. To the love of knowledge, and a desire of excelling in every branch of learning to which he applied, they allured him by the most generous and well-timed rewards; and to habits of industry, sobriety, and self-de-

nial they inured him, by a course of discipline, as conducive to the health of his body as that of his mind. Study and recreation, application and amusement, they blended together in their proper proportion.

The truths of religion they inculcated upon him with the most assiduous attention, endeavouring to explain them to his understanding, and to fix the evidence of them upon his conscience. They presented him with his own picture, as an apostate creature, in the faithful mirror of the Bible, and held up Christ to his view in all the charms of his transcendent love. They taught him that religion was an irreconcilable foe to sin, and a hearty friend to pleasure. They prayed fervently with him and for him, and often urged him earnestly and with tears to pray for himself. And to all their instructions, counsels, and entreaties, they added the powerful allurements of their own sweet, cheerful, and pious example. Thus they led him up, by a prudent, steady, and indulgent hand, through the several stages of education from childhood to majority. And God commanded his blessing upon their endeavours, giving their son, whom they tenderly loved, a heart to obey and serve him.

And now, impressed with the obligations he owed to Heaven, and to parents whom he equally revered and loved, he entered on life, amidst the cordial wishes and fervent prayers of the wise and good, whom he had been used to consider as his best friends, and had made his only companions. In the station he filled, and for which he was well qualified, he drew to him the attention and regards of all around him. Providence smiled on his honest labours and succeeded them beyond his expectations. An agreeable alliance he formed in marriage, and in a few years a hopeful offspring like olive-plants surrounded his table. In the world he was respected, among his friends beloved, and by the church of God revered. And having richly paid back into the bosoms of his fond parents, with filial gratitude and attention, the returns due to their ardent love to him, he at length placidly fell asleep in the arms of his own children, who honoured his memory with the same unfeigned affection he had done that of his parents before him. And what tongue can describe the joys which such parents and such a son must now feel in each others embraces above!

With this transporting scene before our eyes, which of us, whose breast glows with all the warmth of natural affection, accompanied with a sound understanding and genuine piety, but must cordially fall in with the divine admonition in our text! *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*—The welfare of their children, then, is the first and main argument we would urge on parents to persuade them to look well after their education. But our attention ought surely to extend further, I mean,

II. To *the interests of civil society.*

Providence hath so disposed things in the present life, as that men should mutually depend upon each other for their support, protection, and happiness. They are possessed therefore of passions which irresistibly impel them to social connections. But society cannot subsist, to the important and salutary purposes of its appointment, without good government. And government cannot have its due effect, unless men are in general persuaded of the fitness and propriety of submission to it. For though the laws are just and good, and those who govern are intrusted with the necessary powers for carrying them into execution, yet, if profligacy and want of principle universally prevail, the wheels of government will be clogged, and in a course of time every thing will fall back into its original state of anarchy and confusion. Now education is the natural and most effectual mean to prevent those evils, which are so inimical to good government, and of consequence to the interests of society.

Sensible of this, all wise lawgivers have taken care, in the founding civil states, to give every possible encouragement to the education of children. Penal laws have not indeed been deemed necessary to impel parents to their duty, as they have every imaginable inducement to it. But then parental authority has received the fullest support from government, and the disobedience of children has been judged a crime deserving of public reprehension and punishment *a*. Countenance has been given in various ways to the interests of learning, and liberal foundations have been established for the instructing children and youth: and thus the state, and all the other departments of civil society, have been supplied with a succession of able, use-

a See Deut. xxi. 15—21.

ful, and worthy persons. Whoever consults the laws of Moses will find particular regard was paid by him to this matter. The Spartans, a people famous for their national virtue and intrepidity, laid the greatest stress upon education. To this the prosperity and grandeur of the ancient Romans were chiefly to be attributed. And most kingdoms, in proportion to the attention paid to this object, have flourished or declined.

Now what good man is there who does not wish to see his country prosper, trade and commerce flourish, the arts and sciences held in reputation, health and plenty abound, and peace, harmony, and good will prevail among all ranks of men? These are very desirable blessings: every individual, as well as the community in general, is affected by them. But how can these blessings be expected, if no pains are taken to form the morals of youth, to instil the principles of virtue into their minds, and to fit them for the part they are to act in society *a*? On the contrary, these great duties neglected, what is to be apprehended but the most fatal consequences? Let any one sit down and figure to himself the calamities which have befallen kingdoms, once famed for their wealth and splendour, but now sunk into oblivion: let him consider by what means they arose to that pitch of greatness which drew the attention of the whole world to them, and by what means again they were precipitated into destruction: let him reflect on the strange combination of circumstances which operated to their prosperity and their ruin, and mark particularly the influence of education thereon. And then let him say, whether the importance of education to the well being, to the very existence of society, can be estimated too high.

The inhabitants of those states just referred to, trained up from their youth to habits of integrity, temperance, activity, and honour, were united to one another by the firmest bands, became capable of the noblest exertions, patient of fatigue and disappointment, and superior to baseness, treachery, and cruelty.

a Gratum est, quod patriæ civem, populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patriæ sit idoneus, utilis agris.
Utilis et bellorum, et pacis rebus agendis.
Plurimum enim intererit, quibus artibus, et quibus hunc tu
Moribus instituas.——— Juv. *Sat.* 14. *v.* 70.

So they acquired wealth and greatness. But alas! in a course of time, enjoying the luxuries of life in the greatest profusion, and with them every species of gratification, the national character for which they had been so famed took a turn. Their ancient hardiness and simplicity degenerated into sloth and effeminacy. Their faculties were enervated and their morals corrupted. Honour and good faith yielded to avarice and cunning. Amidst the greedy pursuits of self-interest, the general good was overlooked, the welfare of posterity disregarded, and the education of their children, an attention to which laid the foundation of their greatness, was wholly neglected.

And what was the tremendous consequence? No other than might naturally be expected. Civil feuds and animosities were excited, the laws trampled under foot, public authority treated with contempt, the nerves of government relaxed, the national counsels infatuated, mutual confidence broken, and the horrors of inhumanity, oppression, and violence, spread far and wide. Neighbouring powers availed themselves of these their internal divisions. Their country was invaded, their wealth captured, their towns desolated, their wives and children carried into wretched captivity, themslves slain by the sword, and their name as a people marked in the faithful page of history with as great reproach and infamy, as that of their ancestors had been with respect and honour.

And now if this account of the matter be true, how can he be a patriot, a real friend of his country, who is remiss in the discharge of the duties he owes to his children? If indeed men have lost all natural affection, and are become downright brutes, I am sensible this argument will have no effect. But it is to be hoped this is not yet the case with us. If then we have any concern for the welfare of posterity, any desire that our country may exist to a late period of time, any passion for its future reputation and honour, any anxiety about the present state of our affairs, any wish that we may emerge out of the calamities in which we are involved, resume our former lustre, and enjoy again the great national blessings of peace, unanimity, and prosperity; let us acquit ourselves as good members of the community, and be persuaded from the love we owe to our country as well as to our children, to give them every advantage of a virtuous education

within our power.—But there is one motive further to be urged, and that is,

III. The concern we feel, as Christians, for *the progress of religion* in the world.

I am here addressing myself to those parents who know what religion is, who firmly believe its sacred truths, have felt their power and tasted their sweetness. You agree with Solomon in giving it the character of *Wisdom*, and account those happy who find it. *For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand: and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* a. While you contemplate the transcendent beauties of her countenance, listen to the sweet instructions of her lips, and feel yourselves enriched with the noble gifts she bestows, you wonder that this heavenly stranger meets with a no more hearty welcome in our world. Persuaded that she is capable of making men wise unto salvation, of giving a new bias to their depraved inclinations, of regulating their disordered passions, of soothing their afflicted breasts, and animating them to the most generous actions, you would gladly introduce her to the acquaintance of all around you. Assured that her presence, energy, and influence, will turn a barren wilderness into a fruitful garden, convert lions into lambs, restore beauty, order, and happiness to society, and reflect a new lustre and glory upon the whole face of nature, it is your wish, it is your endeavour, to promote her interests to the utmost of your power among mankind.

Now the training up your children in the way they should go, is one mean among many others to spread the empire of religion in the world. No doubt God has ways of accomplishing his wise and benevolent purpose, without the intervention of human means. His gospel has hitherto stood its ground amidst the most inveterate opposition from vice and infidelity, and the shameful neglects too of those who have professed the warmest regards to it. Prodigious multitudes, involved in the thickest shades of ignorance and barbarism, and destitute of all advan-

a Prov. iii. 13—17.

tages of education, have been converted to the truth. And in such enlightened countries as ours, there are instances not a few of those who have grown up into life utter strangers to religion, and yet have afterwards become seriously acquainted with it. And it must be acknowledged, that the utmost exertions on the part of parents to bring up their children in the fear of God, will fail, without the concurrence of a superior energy. The seeds of vice and sin are so deeply sown in the human heart, that the grace of God is absolutely necessary to eradicate them. This is the doctrine of the Bible, and the inefficacy, in some sad instances, of the best education, well agrees with what the Scriptures teach. But this militates not against our duty. What God has commanded ought to be done. Wherefore the fitness of the mean to the end proposed, the express authority of holy writ, and the constant example of the wisest and best of men, may be urged as motives to excite Christian parents to this arduous and important service.

Will you say, Sirs, that there is not a fitness in the means to the end? Hath not the explaining to children the real difference between good and evil, the representing to them a plain truth that vice brings after it misery, the stating to them a clear fact that human nature is miserably depraved, the putting them in mind of death and a future judgment, the holding up to their view the great Saviour of sinners, the painting before their eyes the pleasures of religion in the present life, and the joys and triumphs of it in another world; I say, have not these measures, accompanied with seasonable restraints and encouragements, a direct tendency, with the blessing of God, to generate sentiments of virtue and piety in their minds? Have they not in innumerable instances produced this effect? Joseph, Samuel, Obadiah, Timothy, and many others might be mentioned in proof of this assertion. And have not such children, inheriting the piety of their ancestors, become themselves, and their descendants after them, the honoured instruments of propagating religion in the world?

This great duty, too, has the express authority of God's word. *I know Abraham*, says the Lord, *that he will command his children after him, that is, diligently instruct them, and solemnly enjoin it upon them, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do jus-*

tice and judgment a. Moses again and again enforces it with great earnestness in the book of Deuteronomy *b*: and gives commandment that *if a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or his mother, and who when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; but is a glutton, and a drunkard: he shall be stoned to death c.* Very tremendous judgments are denounced on the house of Eli for the impieties of his children, and for his not having exerted his parental authority over them, as the law of nature and of God had required. *I will judge his house for ever*, says the Lord, *for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, or frowned not upon them d.* David instructed Solomon in his duty, and with great affection besought him *to keep the way of the Lord his God, and to take heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the Lord had charged Moses with, concerning Israel e.* The several passages which occur in the book of Proverbs respecting the education of children might here be mentioned *f*. And to come down to the New Testament, the duty of parents is implied in the admonitions there given children to obey and honour them *g*; and it is more strongly expressed in the exhortations to parents themselves, *to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord h*; and *to rule their own houses well, having their children in subjection with all gravity i.* But the text, were that the only passage in the book of God to our purpose, would sufficiently recognize the plain dictate of nature on this matter—*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

But there is one more consideration to enforce the idea of the divine authority in this matter, which must not be omitted, and that is, the tender compassion which the blessed God has every where in Scripture expressed for young children. Passages of this sort are too numerous to be cited. But, methinks, the language of them all is much the same, as hath often been observed, with that of Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses,

a Gen. xviii. 18, 19. *b* Deut. vi. 6, 7. xi. 18, 19.
c Deut. xxi. 18—21. *d* 1 Sam. iii. 11—13. *e* 1 Chron. xxii. 12, 13.
f Prov. xix. 18. xxiii. 13, 14. xxix. 15, 17. *g* Col. iii. 20, 21, &c.
h Eph. vi. 4. *i* 1 Tim. iii. 4, 12.

Take this child and nurse it for me a. "Let there be the like tenderness in your breasts towards your offspring that there is in mine towards them and you. Do your duty, and you shall not fail to have your wages." And such, surely, was the sentiment our Saviour meant to convey, when *he took up little children in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them* b. And I must add, that the condescension of the great God, in styling himself our Father, and the measures which, as such, he takes to prepare us for the inheritance we are to enjoy in heaven, when arrived at man's estate; furnish at once the most powerful argument to excite us to our duty, and the plainest directions to guide us therein.

And now, can we find it in our hearts to resist the united force of all these motives, pouring in upon us from every quarter, and addressing themselves to every passion of the human breast? Can we annihilate all concern for the interests of our children, the welfare of our country, the glory of God, and our own comfort and honour here and hereafter? Can we see ourselves surrounded with those dear objects of our love to whom under God we gave existence, beseeching us with tears to become their guardians, patrons, and friends? Can we hear the cries of our country, amidst the wounds she has received from infidelity and irreligion, entreating us to have compassion, for her sake, on our offspring? Can we hear the authoritative voice of God himself, commanding us, at the peril of all the infamy and anguish which brutal neglect will sooner or later bring on us, *to train up our children in the way they should go?*—and yet remain totally unaffected? God forbid! These motives surely will have their effect. You do feel them, parents. Set about your duty then in earnest. Be obedient to the voice of Heaven. Convince all around you, that you have not lost sight of the interests of your country. Gratify that unconquerable passion you feel for the happiness of your children. Realize the benefits which, through the divine favour, will result to them from your prudent care and tender love in this world and another. And follow your unwearied endeavours for their welfare, with ardent prayers to God for the desired success.—So, may ten thousand blessings be poured into your bosoms by the

a Exod. ii. 9. b Mark x. 16.

Father of mercies! So, may your dying pillows be made easy by the tenderest offices of filial affection! And so, may you each have the transporting pleasure, on the great day of account, of thus addressing your Judge, "Behold here am I, O Lord, and the children thou hast graciously given me!"

It might now very naturally be expected, that we should close this discourse with an address to children, especially to those who owe to their parents the inestimable advantages of a prudent, virtuous, and religious education: but we forbear at present, as this will be the subject of the next discourse.

DISCOURSE VI.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

EPH. VI. 1—3.—*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

THE artless simplicity and commanding authority with which the moral precepts of the Bible are enjoined upon us, must, I think, strike the mind of every attentive reader with pleasure. Nothing could be more natural than for the apostle, after he had held up to the view of the Ephesians the exceeding riches of the grace of God in Christ, to persuade them to the duties of benevolence. A gospel that originates in supreme love, cannot surely be believed, felt, and enjoyed, without impelling men to every office of kindness which the light of nature teaches and enjoins. Upon these grounds he had recommended not only the more general and public duties of social life, but those particularly of husbands and wives, which we have considered at large in a former discourse. And as families arise out of the conjugal relation, which give existence to another species of duties, essentially important to the welfare of society, these duties

too he explains and enforces. Parents he exhorts to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and children, in our text, to behave themselves with all becoming reverence and duty towards their parents. The business of education, than which there is not any duty of greater consequence to the world and the church, we have largely treated in the preceding discourse. And we now go on to lay open the various offices of filial piety, and our obligations to them.

It is to *Children* the admonition in the text is addressed. In which denomination are included both males and females, of every rank and condition of life; sons and daughters in law; adopted children; and even illegitimate children too, for there is a duty owing from them to their parents however unworthy and dishonourable a part such parents may have acted *a*. And by *Parents* are meant both father and mother, as it is particularly expressed in the commandment which the apostle quotes. *Honour thy father and thy mother.* Which shews that parental authority is not confined to the father only. Be the paternal rights what they may, there are maternal rights also: and these draw after them duties and respects from children to the mother, as well as the former to the father. And it is further to be observed, that obedience and reverence are due not to immediate parents only but to their parents also, that is, grandfathers and grandmothers, and indeed to all in the ascending line, that is, uncles and aunts.

Now the duties enjoined on children in our text to their parents, are all comprehended in the two ideas of *Obedience* and *Reverence.*

First, *Obedience. Children obey your parents.* That is, listen to their instructions, and be obedient to their commands. In the early part of life, when children are totally incapable of governing themselves, absolute and unlimited obedience is required. When reason opens, and they can discern good and evil, they are still to be obedient in all things, so far as is consistent with a good conscience. And ever after, on the liberal grounds of friendship, they are to accommodate themselves to

a Indeed by the law of Solon children basely born were not obliged to maintain their parents. In such high reputation did civilized pagans hold the marriage-relation.

the wishes and views of their parents, provided these do not clash with the duty they owe to superior authority. This limitation some think is expressed in the words immediately subjoined—*Obey your parents in the Lord*; that is, so far as is consistent with the regard you owe to the authority of God. Or perhaps the apostle's intention may be, to point out the piety which should mingle itself with their duty. "Obey them in obedience to the divine command: have regard to Christ in your obedience, and to them as his disciples and servants." And so all the pleasing qualifications of affection, cordiality, and cheerfulness, are included in the admonition.

Secondly, *Reverence. Honour thy father and mother.* That is, cherish in your breasts the most affectionate esteem for their persons and characters; behave yourselves towards them in the most respectful and dutiful manner; and speak of them with all possible honour and reverence. But some think by *honouring* our parents is meant providing for their comfortable support, when advanced in life, and incapable of subsisting themselves: this, however, is most certainly included in the phrase, "Make the latter part of their days as easy and happy to them as you can."

The duties thus enjoined on children to their parents the apostle enforces by various considerations.

The first he mentions is their *fitness. Obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.* It is *just a:* it is fit and reasonable in itself, what the light of nature teaches, and all nations and ages have acknowledged to be expedient. It is most decent and becoming to obey and reverence those, to whom under God we are indebted for our existence. It is on the grounds of equity and gratitude most naturally to be expected, that we should make every return in our power to those, who have shewn us all imaginable care and kindness. And a due regard to their instructions and authority, will in its consequences be greatly beneficial to us; as they are far better able on many accounts to direct and govern us, especially in our minority, than we are ourselves.

The next argument is taken from the express *will of God*, signified in the fifth commandment. This is one of those pre-

cepts of the moral law which the great God so solemnly pronounced on Mount Sinai, and which he writ with his own finger on the tables of stone. With an audible voice he said, *Honour thy father and thy mother:* and it is his pleasure that that voice should be heard through all the world, and to the end of time. Wherefore children are to obey their parents *in the Lord*, that is, in obedience to the authority of the great God.

Here the apostle as he passes on observes, that *this is the first commandment with promise.* From hence the Church of Rome would insinuate, that the second commandment, which is so directly opposed to their doctrine and practice of worshipping images, is not obligatory under the gospel. "For, say they, that commandment hath a promise annexed to it; but the apostle tells us this is the first with promise: wherefore he hereby plainly annihilates that." But the reply is extremely natural. The promise added to the second commandment, (which indeed is rather an assertion than a promise) is no other than a general declaration of God's merciful disposition to all who love him and keep his commandments, and evidently relates to the whole law. Whereas the precept of which the apostle is here speaking, is the first and only one that hath a promise annexed to it peculiar to itself.—It should here also be observed, that the language of the text establishes the authority of the decalogue or moral law, with respect to us Christians as well as the Jews, teaching us not only that we should make it the rule of our lives, but that we may and ought to be influenced in our obedience by a regard to the blessings it promises. And in respect to the precept before us, the apostle evidently meant, by styling it, *the first commandment with promise*, to draw an argument from thence to persuade children to a dutiful behaviour towards their parents. This, as if he had said, is a duty of the greatest consequence, the groundwork of all other social duties, and therefore distinguished from the rest by a particular mark of the divine favour.

And what is the promise, thus held up to the view of children? It is this—*Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.* In Exodus it is expressed somewhat differently, *that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee* [a]. And in

[a] Exod. xx. 12.

Deuteronomy thus, *that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee* a. The sense however is fully conveyed in the text, excepting the promised land's not being particularly mentioned. This omission some suppose was owing to a wish, to preclude all occasion of countenancing a vain confidence which at that time prevailed much among the Jews, that they should not be dispossessed of their country b. But as this epistle was writ to the Ephesian church, which consisted of Gentile as well as Jewish converts, it should rather seem the omission, which does not affect the spirit of the promise, was with a view to accommodate it to Christians in general. Now the plain import of it is this, that those who, in obedience to the divine authority, pay due respect to their parents, will be likely to enjoy worldly prosperity and long life. I say, *likely*, because the promise is so worded as to convey an idea of the direct tendency of dutifulness in children to promote their temporal welfare, which we shall largely shew hereafter is the case. But, considered as a positive promise, it was remarkably fulfilled in regard of the Jews. And however temporal rewards and punishments are not now dispensed in the manner they were among that people, who subsisted under a peculiar form of government; yet there are not a few instances of dutiful children, who have been distinguished by the smiles of Providence: and it is true of them all in regard of their best interests, that acting thus in the fear of God it is well with them in this life, and shall be well with them for ever in the life to come.—Thus the apostle enforces this great duty by the law of nature, the express command of God, and the many advantages that attend the right discharge of it.—The text thus explained, we proceed more particularly to consider,

First, The various offices required of children towards their parents, and,

Secondly, Their obligations to these duties.

First, As to the duties which children owe to their parents.

These we shall class under the three heads of *Obedience*—*Reverence*—and *Support*. *Obedience* I mention first, because the main expressions of it, especially in the absolute and unlimited sense of the word, are required of children in the

a Deut. v. 16. b See Whitby in loc.

early part of life: *Reverence* next, because that ripens and improves with reason: and *Support* last of all, because the tender offices meant by this term, are to be rendered parents in the decline of life, and are with good reason understood to be included, as was observed just now, in the word *honour*.

I. *Obedience.* The duties comprehended in this idea we shall consider in reference to matters—*civil*—and *religious*, keeping in our eye as we pass on the different ages, capacities, and circumstances of children.

1. As to *civil* matters.

In this description we include what relates to food, dress, company, amusements, deportment, learning, discipline, and every thing else which the morals of children are conversant about. The will of the parent in regard of all these matters, under the restrictions which will be hereafter mentioned, should be dutifully complied with.

In the earliest stage of life, obedience is the result of instinct not reasoning. Cast, as infants are, in this helpless state upon the care of others, they are under a necessity of submitting. But when they begin to acquire strength, and to become capable of resisting, they should upon the general idea of filial duty, obey. For though they may not be able clearly to comprehend the fitness of what is required of them, they may yet have sense enough to perceive, that the age, authority, and affection of their parents, give them a right to demand submission and obedience. And for children possessing this idea, to dispute the point with them in any matter insisted on, is to offend against the decision of their own reason. Their reason teaching them submission, their language no doubt should be, "My father knows better than I what is to be done in this case, and therefore I ought to comply; I will comply."

Hence, if we may be allowed to digress a moment, appears the importance of taking pains with children, at this early age, to impress their minds with the general obligations of filial obedience. Parents should now steadily assert their authority, and insist that they will at all events be obeyed, letting their children know by their words and actions that they have power over them, that God has given them that power, and that they hold it by the consent of all mankind. But, at the

same time, they should be alike assiduous to secure their cordial affection, by convincing them that they cannot possibly mean to do them any harm, but on the contrary all the good in their power. So children will be persuaded, that it is their interest as well as their duty to obey, even though what is required does not fall in with their inclinations. But if a child at this early age is froward, obstinate, and unyielding, and a parent through false tenderness suffers him wantonly to violate his commands, the latter is as much, yea, more to blame than the former: and if such perverseness is not subdued, the consequence will in all probability be fatal to them both.—But to return,

When reason further opens, and children become capable of clearly perceiving, not only the authority their parents have over them, but the difference between good and evil, between justice and injustice, truth and falsehood, humility and pride, meekness and passion, gratitude and ill-nature, and the like; then their obligations to obedience increase: for their parents requiring them to do what their own judgment teaches them ought to be done, authority and conscience unite to enforce submission. And of consequence every act of disobedience, in such case, is more criminal than before: for they are now guilty both of acting contrary to a conviction of what is in itself right, and of treating too the authority of their parents with contempt.

Further, when children arrive at mature age, though they are to be justified in disobeying such commands as are directly opposed to the clear dictates of their own reason and judgment, yet they ought to listen respectfully to the counsels of their parents, and in cases of a doubtful nature, on which age and experience are better capable of deciding, it is both their wisdom and duty to yield to their opinion. *My son, hear the instruction of thy father*, says Solomon, *and forsake not the law of thy mother. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck* a. And most certainly it should be their assiduous concern, to please their parents, even to the latest period of their lives, by conforming to their will, not only in matters of importance that are just and right, but in matters

a Prov. i. 8, 9.

perfectly indifferent, and which do not affect the rights of conscience.

In fine, it is an argument of good sense and filial duty in children to take pains to impress this important sentiment on their minds, during their minority especially, that their parents consider their interests as their own, and are much better capable of judging, in most cases, what is expedient for them than they are themselves. Under this persuasion every act of obedience will be easy and pleasant, and draw after it the happiest consequences to both parties: while, on the contrary, ill-humour, discontent, and refractoriness will not fail at once to afflict the injured parent, and to make the undutiful child himself miserable.—Let us now proceed,

2. To matters of *Religion.*

Hitherto we have been speaking of moral duties only, I mean such as are discoverable by the light of nature, and which we owe to our fellow-creatures. Our view is now extended further—to discoveries which God is supposed to have made of himself, and the manner he will be worshipped, by a positive revelation. The opinions of mankind differ here, and a great variety of religions obtain in the world. Wherefore the question before us is, How far the religion of parents is binding upon their children? Or, What influence the opinion, profession, and authority of parents, are to have upon filial obedience?

Here we are to proceed by steps, as we did under the former particular. When children are in the earliest stage of life, and incapable of judging of these matters, it is no doubt their indispensable duty to treat the religion of their parents with all decent respect, and to conform regularly to the externals of divine worship. They are not as yet *sui juris:* and if parents, conceiving of this or that mode of religion as of divine authority, are obliged in conscience not only themselves to conform to it, but to enjoin conformity on them; it follows that they ought to comply, there being no dictate of reason or conscience on their part to justify a refusal. It is therefore a violation of the law of nature for the children of a Mahometan, a Papist, or any other religious profession, to treat the opinion or worship of their parents with disrespect and contempt. Nature revolts

at the idea. A Christian cannot bear to see his creed or his devotion laughed at by any, much less by his children. And why should we suppose those who differ from us have not the same feelings on this head with ourselves? When Moses says, *Thou shalt not revile the gods* [a], he perhaps means to forbid an indecent and opprobrious treatment of the religion of the country where we happen to be, however contrary it may be to our own views. And if so, this precept of his does in effect still more strongly forbid a similar behaviour in children towards the religion of their parents.

But that absolute obedience in matters of religion which parents have a right to exact of their children during their minority, becomes more and more limited or conditional as they approach to years of discretion. As soon as ever they are at all capable of perceiving the grounds on which the religion of their parents stands, it is their unquestionable duty to enquire into those grounds. Enquiry is what parents ought to enjoin, and it is one part of filial obedience to comply with such injunctions. And while reason teaches that they should not take their religion absolutely on trust, it teaches also that they are under the strongest obligations to listen seriously to what is offered in favour of it. A child ought to suppose, unless he has glaring proof to the contrary, that his father is sincere and in earnest in pressing these matters upon him. And if this persuasion does not awaken his attention, and put him upon the most diligent enquiry, he is chargeable with manifest undutifulness and disaffection. So far parental authority should influence children.

And its use thus far, be their parents' religion true or false, is very considerable. If it is false, filial attachment, by thus exciting them to enquiry, is an advantage, as it becomes an occasion of their detecting the mistaken grounds of such religion, and so of dissenting for just reasons from it. And if it is true, the same filial attachment is of use, as it thus becomes the occasion of their possessing a satisfactory evidence of the truth of what they before only presumed to be true. And more than this, that filial affection which thus magnifies in their eye the father's sincerity and zeal, and gives the most pleasing aspect to his pious and holy example; by so doing, possesses them of

a Exod. xxii. 28.

a further collateral and confirming evidence of the truth of the religion they have thus examined and approved. But, when filial attachment precludes enquiry, and has no other effect than to beget a mere implicit faith, the obedience which results from such faith is reprehensible and criminal. Conformity to the religion of our parents, on this ground, is disobedience to the voice of reason and of God.

The amount of the whole is in short this: filial duty demands on the part of children, when become capable of reasoning, the most sober and diligent attention to the instruction of their parents in matters of religion: but it does not require implicit assent and obedience. On the contrary, such assent and obedience yielded to parental authority, without enquiry, and more especially in contradiction to the sense and dictate of conscience, is a violation of the allegiance due to God only.

When *the woman of Samaria* had listened to our Saviour's discourse, and was persuaded on the fullest conviction of his being the Messiah; she immediately informed her relations, neighbours, and acquaintance, of what had happened, and entreated them to come and see the man who had told her all she ever did, and judge for themselves whether he was not the Christ. The conduct of the Samaritans on this occasion, is precisely such as filial duty requires of children towards their parents in matters of religion, when they are capable of judging of them. The Samaritans did not absolutely refuse their assent to the woman's report. That would have been both unreasonable and indecent. It might, or it might not be true. She was evidently in earnest—Their good she consulted—The story upon the face of it carried the air of probability and importance—And to have treated it with contempt would have been highly unbecoming. The proper use, therefore, of her influence and authority was to excite their attention and enquiry. This effect it had. They went out of the city to Christ, heard him themselves, and then declared that they believed, not merely because of her saying, (that was only the occasion of their coming at the desired evidence) but because, having heard him, they were persuaded upon the same grounds which had convinced her, that he was indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world *a*.

a John iv. 29, 30, 41, 42.

It is here further to be observed, that however children may see reason, upon calm and serious enquiry, to dissent from the religion of their parents; they are nevertheless obliged to treat both them and their profession with all decent respect. Instead of contumeliously affronting the one or the other, it is rather their duty decently to throw a veil over them, as Shem and Japheth did over their father's nakedness.

II. *Reverence* is the next branch of filial duty to be considered.

Little need be said here by way of explanation. Both the *Persons* and *Characters* of parents should be held in the highest esteem and veneration. As to the former, the language and deportment of children should be decent and respectful. The familiarities indeed of early life, and of hours of recreation and pleasantry, are very properly to be allowed. A haughty, distant, morose carriage on the part of parents, tends to break the spirits of children, and to beget a disgust in their breasts, which, however it may assume the appearance of reverence, will in the end weaken, if not totally destroy, the springs of ingenuous and affectionate obedience. Yet a too great freedom in discourse and behaviour should be checked, not only as it is a breach of good manners, but as it will be apt in a course of time to degenerate into a contempt of parental authority. A meek, submissive, respectful demeanour in children towards their parents, is lovely in the eyes of all, and is ever deemed by prudent people an argument of good sense as well as filial piety. The behaviour of Joseph to his father Jacob, and of Solomon to his mother Bathsheba, fails not to give pleasure to every reader. The former we see, though next in authority to Pharaoh, *presenting himself to his father, and bowing before him with his face to the earth a*: and the latter, though a mighty prince, *rising up from his throne to meet his mother, bowing himself to her, and causing a seat to be set for her at his right hand b.* The ancient laws of the Romans carried the matter so far, as to oblige children to style their parents gods.

But such a deportment in children will not be natural and easy, unless they cherish in their breasts a partiality in favour of their parents' *Character* for good sense, integrity, and piety,

a Gen. xlvi. 29. xlviii. 12. *b* 1 Kings ii. 19.

Where these qualities do really reside, they demand a greater degree of respect from children, in whose eyes they may be supposed to magnify, than from others. Where they really are not, natural affection should at least create a doubt on the matter, if not wholly veil the contrary imperfections from their view. And where they are found in a degree only, it is the tender office of filial imagination to heighten and exaggerate them. Credulity here is an argument of good sense, and partiality a virtue rather than a vice. What son, unless he is a brute, can willingly admit the idea of his parents that they are fools, or that they are void of all principle and piety? On the contrary, what ingenuous dutiful child is there, but feels himself disposed to believe that they possess every natural and moral excellence in a greater perfection than others? This persuasion, I say, should be cultivated as far as it can any way consist with truth.

The effect will be highly beneficial in many instances. It will be so to children themselves, to conciliate their regards to the counsels and precepts of their parents: for that obedience which is the result of a strong prejudice in favour of the wisdom, experience, and good will of those who govern, is always more easy and pleasant than that which is extorted by a mere dread of authority. This partiality, too, will be highly pleasing to parents, and add greatly to their happiness; and as it will cement the union between both parties, so will contribute not a little to domestic felicity. Besides, this reverence for their parents will interest children in the defence of their characters on all occasions, which is a very important branch of filial duty. Some of the noblest actions recorded in profane and sacred history, are those which have sprung from the warm and undisguised zeal of persons of distinguished virtue for the just reputation of their ancestors.—Once more,

III. *Support* is another office due from children to their parents.

In this idea is included every kind of assistance that can be afforded them, to render their last days easy and comfortable *a*. It is sad indeed to see old age, which should have nothing but

a By one of the laws of Solon, he is accounted ατιμος, infamous, who beats his parents, or does not provide for them.

its own infirmities to struggle with, sinking under the pressures of penury and want; and especially when this is the effect of the imprudent arrangement of their affairs, in favour of unnatural children. For surely nothing can be more foolish than for parents, whom Providence has blessed with an affluence of the things of this life, to throw themselves into a state of absolute dependance on their children. If this is at any time done, through an excess of fondness on the one part, and in compliance with avaricious views on the other; very slender returns of filial reverence and affection are to be expected. Such unhappy parents have, in too many instances, lived to see their imprudent confidence abused, and their incautious generosity rewarded with neglect, if not contempt. The idea, however, of securing the homage and obedience of children, by parsimoniously withholding from them the necessary means of improving their fortunes in life, is as mistaken a conduct on the other hand. A competency is all a prudent and good parent would wish to reserve to himself, when ease and retirement are his only objects as to this world, except it be the gratification of a benevolent disposition, in the little circle of declining life. "I would not," says a sprightly writer, "in the evening of my days strip myself to my very shirt; a warm night gown I may be allowed to provide myself."

But, possessed of such an uncontrolled competency, there are yet many offices of kindness requisite on the part of children, to render the closing scene of life comfortable. Attention, reverence, sympathy, and an assiduous wish to please, are the proper cordials to be administered to old age, by the tender hands of filial affection *a*. And these are cordials which dutiful children will account it their highest honour and happiness to administer to the latest period. To that moment they will look forward with painful anxiety, its approach they will dread, and use every means in their power to protract it to the utmost

a Me let the tender office long engage
To rock the cradle of reposing age;
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death:
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,
And keep a while one parent from the sky! POPE.

length. And when it does arrive, they will meet it with tears of genuine sorrow and regret. And how pleasing the sight to see dutiful and affectionate children, after having cheerfully devoted the vigour of youth to the service of their parents, surrounding their dying beds with unfeigned grief, following their dear remains to the grave with the most passionate lamentations, and recording in their faithful memory the debt of gratitude they owe to parental care and love! Affecting examples of this kind I might here cite, but they shall be referred to the following sermon; in which we mean to hold up to the view of children the various considerations which humanity and religion suggest, to move the springs of filial duty and affection.

PART II.

We have laid before children, in the preceding sermon, the duties they owe their parents; all which are comprehended in the ideas of *Obedience—Reverence*—and *Support*. And we now proceed,

Secondly, To persuade them by suitable motives to the cheerful discharge of these duties. Our arguments we shall class under three heads,—the *law of nature*—the *express command of God*—and the *examples* of persons eminent for their virtue and piety. And how happy will it be, if these reasonings, accompanied with a divine energy, produce the desired effect!

I. *The law of Nature.*

This law operates two ways, by *Instinct*, and by *Reason*. *Instinct* is a strong bias to actions, which produces its effect without any previous reasoning or consideration. It is common to men and brutes, and cannot be counteracted without a violent force put on nature. Of this kind, as we have observed before, is that excessive fondness which parents, particularly mothers, feel for their offspring. And of this kind, too, is that regard which children feel for their parents, especially in the earlier part of life. During that period, it supplies the place of reason, and urges them to that reverence and obedience, which they afterwards come clearly to perceive is their duty. And from this principle, the force of which all children feel, we may be allowed to argue with them, as they are advancing to years of discretion. Cast your eyes back, children, to the earliest

moment you can recollect; call to mind the eagerness and attention with which you looked up to your parents for support and protection, and the reverence, submission, and obedience which this attachment to them drew after it: and say, whether you can avoid inferring from thence, now you are capable of reasoning, your obligation to the duties we have been recommending. It is the voice of nature: and will you, can you eradicate from your breasts a propensity that is coeval with your existence? If you could, what would be the effect but to sink you beneath the level of the brute creation?—Horrid degradation!

But it is *Reason* that enables us to perceive what are the true grounds upon which the law of nature stands. And if we can clearly make it appear, that *Equity*, *Gratitude*, and *Interest* require a cheerful compliance with the duties we have been recommending, it will follow that whoever withholds such compliance stands chargeable with complicated guilt and shameful absurdity.

1. The law of *equity*, in the first place, demands filial obedience.

It is a truth acknowledged on all hands, that respect and submission are due from inferiors to their superiors. The authority which the latter acquire over the former is founded in age, wisdom, experience, property, benefits conferred, and the consent of the community: and these obligations, saving the just rights of conscience, are not to be disputed without manifest injustice. Now upon this ground how equitable are the claims of parents upon their children! They have the advantage of age, experience, and property; to which must be added the consideration of their having done more for their children than any others could possibly do for them, yea, that of their being under God the instruments of their existence. Should it be objected, "You have done no more for me than natural affection obliged you to do." It is replied, That is not in every instance true: and if it were, it does not in justice vacate their claim of obedience. But the best reply to such unnatural disingenuity is, "Let *your* children, when you have them, object this to you, and then tell us how you like such treatment *a*." Indeed, the

a Ταυτῳ γινε περι τυς γονεις, οὑς αν ευξαιο περι σεαυτον γενεσθαι τυς σεαυτυ παιδας.

common sense and feelings of mankind reprobate such language. All wise and good men are agreed in the reasonableness of filial obedience, and nothing but the most horrid depravity can extort from the human breast an objection to it.

Here I cannot help taking notice of the unexampled absurdity and profligacy of the leaders among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, who under a specious pretence of regard to positive, sapped the foundation of moral, duties. In no instance was it more flagrant, than in their decision on a question relative to what is now before us. A man wishes to be free from his obligation to this great command, *Honour thy father and mother.* He comes to these men for advice upon the matter. And what say they? "Oh! bring a gift to the altar, do some work of supererogation, and you shall be free." Thus did these hypocrites make the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition *a*. What sober man but shudders at such impiety as this! And how does this monstrous perversion of the grounds of morality, tend directly to the dissolution of all the bands of civil society, and the introduction of every kind of iniquity! *Obey your parents then, children, for this is right,* it is just.—But to the demands of justice we will add those,

2. Of *Gratitude.*

And here, if there be any the least ingenuous sentiment in the human breast, we have an opportunity of addressing it by motives that are irresistible. Ye children that are just rising into life, cast your eyes backward to the first moment of your existence, and realize the innumerable expressions of parental affection, with which you have been followed to the present time. What pangs did not your tender mother endure when she brought you into life! With how fond a heart did she clasp you in her arms, lay you to her breast, and pour her very soul upon you! With what painful anxiety did she anticipate your wants! With what unwearied attention did she provide for them! And from how many evils did she hourly protect you, gathering you as a hen gathereth her chickens! What a variety of comforts have your parents, each of them, denied them-

Do you act towards your parents in such manner, as you would wish your own children to act towards yourself.—Isocr.

a Matt. xv. 3—6.

selves, and what a variety of labours have they incessantly undergone, in order to procure for you a thousand enjoyments! Your happiness, your usefulness, your honour, your final salvation, were their grand objects through the term, the long and tedious term as it seemed to you, of non-age. How often, shook with alternate hopes and fears, have they stood trembling by your cradle and your bed, watching the event of threatening disorders! With what solicitude have they led you on every step, through the devious paths of childhood and youth, holding you back from this and that insidious snare, and shielding you against this and that violent assault of temptation! What various reasonings, apprehensions, and cares have agitated their minds, respecting your education, the manner in which they should conduct themselves towards you, and the hands to whose guidance they should entrust you! How often have their hearts bled within them, when regard to your real interests obliged them to sacrifice fond indulgence to the demands of rigorous correction! How have they restrained your impetuous passions, borne with your childish prejudices, gratified your innocent wishes, pleaded with you on your best interests, and poured out their cries and tears to Heaven on your behalf! And with what painful anxiety, mingled with eager hope, have they looked forward to the event of all those measures they have taken with you, to prepare you for the station of life you are perhaps now just entering upon!

And now are there no returns due to all these expressions of parental kindness? Shall inattention and neglect, on your part, draw tears of sadness from those eyes, which have so often looked on you with tender pity? Shall harsh and disrespectful language grate on those ears, which have been ever open to your cries? Shall unnatural disobedience pierce the bosom that has so passionately loved you? Shall sullen ingratitude crush the heart that has doted upon you? Shall folly and sin, in a word, bring down those grey hairs to the grave which affection for you, as well as old age, hath rendered truly venerable?—God forbid! On the contrary, does not every ingenuous sentiment, and every pious feeling of the heart, call loudly on you to exert your utmost efforts towards discharging a debt, which after all it will never be in your power to repay? Ought you

not to revere their persons, and hold their characters sacred? Ought you not to approach them with respect, and to kindle into a flame at every insult offered them? Ought not their commands to be a law with you, and every deviation from them a force put upon your nature? Ought you not religiously to regard their admonitions, and patiently submit to their censures? Ought you not to consult their happiness in every step you take, and accommodate yourselves even to their humours? Ought you not, when they are in the decline of life, to afford them all the assistance in your power?—to watch their looks with assiduity and attention—to bear their pains with them—to sooth their ruffled passions—support their feeble steps—make their bed in their sickness—and, if you cannot hold back death from them, yet by your sympathy and prayers disarm him at least of some of his terrors? *Gratitude* for a thousand kind offices you have received, demands all this at your hands.—Once more,

3. *Interest* holds the same language.

To resist instinct, to oppose reason, to deny the claims of justice, and to stifle the intreaties of gratitude, one should suppose must be a painful business. Yet the momentary pleasure resulting from the gratification of depraved passions, does in some instances get the better of all these considerations: shame, however, and remorse must be the consequence. On the contrary, a ready compliance with the dictates of nature and reason seldom fails to afford pleasure: or, if some sacrifice must be made of present ease and pleasure, yet the solid advantages that result thence are more than an equvalent. Such is the case here.

When frowardness in early life prevails over parental authority, children are themselves the sufferers as well as their parents, and indeed in a greater degree than they. They not only lose all the real benefits which would result to them from submission, but a foundation is laid for miseries of the most fatal kind in this world and in another. Not to speak of the absolute necessity of submission, in order to their present support and protection; how great is its importance, in order to their escaping future evils, and in order to the forming them for the duties and pleasure of mature age! Children accustomed to violate the laws of filial obedience, seldom when grown

up make good members of society. Impatient, self-willed, proud, fierce, and void of natural affection, they are a disgrace to their species, shunned of all good men, and abandoned to contempt and misery. While they who obediently submit to the yoke nature kindly imposes, are hereby fitted for honour, prosperity, and all the social enjoyments of life.

Here let us consider, a little more attentively, the influence which a dutiful deportment towards their parents hath upon the reputation, fortune, comfort, and, with the blessing of God, final happiness of youth.—What young person of a liberal mind but would be glad to be on a respectable footing, in the circle of a virtuous acquaintance? And what is there that tends so directly to secure to him this felicity, as the character of being a dutiful son? In this idea are comprehended all the social and friendly virtues. Thus described, he is understood to be just, humane, and benevolent; and so is respected, confided in, and beloved, has an easy admission to the acquaintance of men of character, and a natural introduction to business.—Religiously regarding the admonitions and cautions of prudent and affectionate parents, he escapes a thousand evils into which conceit, perverseness, and ill-education precipitate multitudes around him; and paying a due attention to their maxims and counsels, he acquires a thousand enjoyments which he would otherwise miss of. Led by the skilful hand of age and experience, faithfully and cordially held forth to his assistance, he is guided safely through the dangerous path of youth and temptation, to the fair eminence of reputation, happiness, and usefulness. How many have gratefully acknowledged themselves indebted, under Providence, to parental wisdom, for the extraordinary success they have met with in worldly business, the distinguished situations in life to which they have attained, and the reputation in which they have been held by all around them! Had it been their unhappiness, as it has of too many young people, to turn with disgust from the sage advice of their fathers, to trust to their own understandings, and to fall in with the flattering counsels of youthful companions, the reverse would have been their fortune, and they sunk into disgrace, misery and oblivion. But, besides the consideration of the many advantages which result *directly*, and in the natural course of things, from a dutiful at-

tention to the instructions of virtuous and prudent parents, it is to be remembered that such conduct is pleasing to God, and usually followed with the smiles of Providence. But of this we shall have occasion to speak more largely hereafter.

The pleasure, too, which an ingenuous mind must feel in the idea of making parents happy, by rendering them that reverence, obedience, and support which is their just due, clearly shews it to be the interest of children so to do. Benevolence is its own reward: and if this is true in regard of offices of kindness in general, with how much greater force may this sentiment be applied to the matter before us! Where justice, gratitude, affection, and instinct all unite to persuade us to make others happy, what pain must it give us to resist! What pleasure to comply! Can I then see a parent, to whom I owe ten thousand obligations, unhappy, and not be myself unhappy? especially if I have ground to apprehend, that a jealousy of my being deficient in point of tenderness is the cause of it? On the contrary, what satisfaction, what refined satisfaction, must I feel from contributing the utmost in my power to his or her repose and comfort, especially in the closing scene of life! Every such exertion, though painful in itself, must be pleasant, infinitely pleasant, in the reflection. O the joy! to smooth the brow of parental adversity, to assist the infirmities of declining nature, to wipe away the falling tear, lift up the palsied hand, convert languor into smiles, and make the dying bed of old age easy!

But the most important consideration of all is, the influence which filial obedience hath upon the religious character of children, and of consequence on their noblest interests here and hereafter. If our parents fear God, our final salvation is their grand object. With a view to this they teach, counsel, restrain, and correct us; weep over us, expostulate with us, and pray incessantly for us. Now what are we doing, when we turn a deaf ear to all they say, but depriving ourselves of the greatest advantages, and laying violent hands on our immortal souls? A religious education is a singular blessing. Happy they who improve it! How many perverse undutiful children have lamented their abuse of it, with the sharpest accents, upon their dying beds! And how many of the contrary character, whose dutiful carriage has furnished one among many other proofs of their

piety, have acknowledged this great benefit with their latest breath, thanking God that they were not left to the folly and madness of treating parental counsel and authority with contempt!—It is your *Interest* then, children, to obey your parents. Your reputation, your health, your worldly prosperity, your comfort, your happiness—your happiness in this world and in that to come, all, under God, depend upon it.—From *the law of Nature* we proceed now,

II. To urge upon you *the express command of God.*

Honour thy father and thy mother, was one of those commands pronounced by the blessed God himself on Mount Sinai, amidst the solemnities of thunder, lightening, fire, and smoke *a*. It is the next in order to those which respect our duty to God, and takes the precedence of all the other duties required of us towards our neighbour. It is put in immediate connection with divine worship: *Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God b.* And indeed it is not imaginable, that such children as are not disposed to honour their parents, can be in a disposition to worship God *c*. The most tremendous judgments are denounced on those who violate this law. Under the Jewish economy, he that cursed his father or his mother, was to be put to death *d*. And the stubborn, disobedient, and rebellious son, having been convicted of these offences before the elders of his city, was to be stoned with stones that he die *e*. Among the curses to be pronounced on Mount Gerizzim this was one, *Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother: and all the people shall say, amen f.* Solomon in the book of Proverbs holds the same language, *Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness g. Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, it is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer h.* And again, *The eye that*

a Exod. xx. 12. *b* Lev. xix. 3.

c The whole body of the Athenian laws, in the early state of that people, was comprised in one line, "Honour your parents; Worship the gods; Hurt not animals." And Plutarch says, Οὐδ' αν παλιν μειζον ιδοις αθεου γιγνομενον της περι γονεις ολιγωριας και παλημμελειας. There is not a greater evidence of an atheist than in a man's despising and injuring his parents.

d Exod. xxi. 17.—Lev. xx. 9. *e* Deut. xxi. 18—21. *f* Deut. xxvii. 16.

g Prov. xx. 20. *h* Prov. xxviii. 24.

mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it a. The prophet Ezekiel exhibits this, among many other heavy charges, against the Jews, *that they set light by father and mother;* and threatens them with very sore calamities on account of it *b.* And with these remarkable words the canon of the Old Testament scriptures is closed, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse *c.*'

What the moral law, by the lips of Moses and the prophets, thus enjoins, the New Testament confirms. Our Lord recognizes the duties of filial obedience, in his discourse with the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he severely reprehends for having mutilated the commandment of God respecting this matter, and made it of none effect by their tradition. 'God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition *d.*' And as he thus establishes the authority of the divine command, so he makes that affection which nature hath implanted in the breasts of children to their parents, and on which the duties of filial obedience are grounded, a measure by which every disciple of his is to estimate the genuineness and transcendency of his love to him: 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me *e.*' The apostles, too, particularly enjoin this precept on children. 'Obey your parents,' say they, 'in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord *f.*' 'If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God *g.*' And among the many striking characters by which the degeneracy of the last times is strongly

a Prov. xxx. 17. *b* Ezek. xxii. 7. *c* Mal. iv. 5, 6.
d Matt. xv. 4—6. *e* Matt. x. 37. *f* Col. iii. 20.
g 1 Tim. v. 4.

marked, those of 'disobedience to parents,' and 'the want of natural affection,' are not the least *a*.

But without citing any further authorities from Scripture, we shall content ourselves with recalling your attention to the words of the text. 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.' The law of nature is the law of God. Whatever is fit and right, that God requires: obedience to parents is fit and right: that therefore God requires. This, you see, is expressly declared in the text. But more than this, the apostle refers us back to the decalogue, telling us that that is binding on Gentiles as well as Jews, upon us under the Christian as well as those under the Mosaic dispensation. It is God's command now as much as when he spoke those words himself on Mount Sinai, 'Honour thy father and mother.' Wilfully, therefore, to violate this law, is to offend against the express authority of God: and cursed is he who thus dares to affront his Creator. What then are they doing who trifle with the obligations they owe their parents? To all such impenitent sinners, the Jew first and the Gentile also, he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.

But, in order yet further to enforce obedience to this command, the apostle holds up to our view the promise originally annexed to it. *It is*, he reminds us, *the first commandment with promise*—distinguished by a particular mark of the divine regard, and designed to be considered by us as the ground of all the other duties we owe to society. He that wilfully violates this precept, is in the direct road to the open violation of all the precepts that follow. And indeed it were easy to shew, both from the reason and nature of the thing, and from the history of mankind, that all those tremendous evils which shake the foundations of civil society, such as theft, murder, adultery, perjury, and the like, originate from the want of natural affection, and a failure in filial obedience. And on the contrary, it were as easy to shew, that all the social virtues comprehended in the general idea of love to our neighbour, naturally flow from this first and most important of them, dutifulness to parents.

a 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3.

There scarce ever was an affectionate obedient child who did not make a useful member of society.

And how much it is the will of God that a universal attention should be paid to this precept, may be further argued from the promise itself of temporal blessings annexed to it. *Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.* I mean not here to shew how filial obedience tends to promote worldly prosperity; that has been done already: but to consider worldly prosperity as actually promised to filial obedience. That the promise was so to be understood in reference to the Jews, none I suppose doubt. It was by temporal rewards and punishments chiefly that they were governed. And he who carefully examines their history, will find not a few instances of the fulfilment of this promise to persons eminent for filial piety. Some of them we shall have occasion to mention under the next head of discourse. But the promise, as appears by the use the apostle here makes of it, extends further than to the Jews. And if we will understand the phrases of *its being well with us*, and *our living long on the earth*, in a qualified sense, (as we certainly should, the state of Christians in civil society being different from that of the Jews) it will not be difficult to prove, that God is mindful of his promise now as well as formerly. There are few ages, and few countries, which do not furnish some remarkable instances directly in point to the matter before us. We ourselves have known persons, whose tender regards to their parents have been tried by very peculiar circumstances, and who have acquitted themselves in a manner as extraordinary: these persons, I say, we have seen emerge from low and obscure stations in life to situations of affluence and eminence, in which they have flourished to a good old age. So that it might be said of them in the strictest sense of the expression, that it hath been well with them, and that they have lived long on the earth. But admitting, with respect to many dutiful children, that an abundance of wealth, honour, and years does not fall to their share; yet if so much of this world's good is allotted them as it is for their real advantage to have, and if, having been useful and happy in life, they die in honour and peace, the words of our text may be said, in the general and substantial import of them, to be made good to them. And that

this is a fact in regard of those who obey their parents *in the Lord*, that is, obey them from a sense of duty to God, is capable of clear proof. Such persons may be styled pious or godly, and we are assured that *godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come a.*

It is the will of God then, children, that you obey your parents. Be persuaded, therefore, to your duty. You believe that there is a God, that he governs the world, that prosperity and adversity are at his disposal, that you must die, and that your happiness in a future state depends upon his favour. Will you then, dare you, be wilfully disobedient to so great a Being, who can make you miserable in this world, and who can destroy both soul and body in hell? But rather let me entreat you, by the mercies of God, to render a cheerful obedience to his will —by the mercies of a God, who, in the character of a tender and indulgent Father, deigns to pardon the numerous offences of us his undutiful but penitent children, for the sake of the obedience and death of Christ his only-begotten and well-beloved Son.—And now, to all the arguments we have drawn from the *law of nature*, and the *express command of God*, I have only to add those which result,

III. From *Example*.

Here to illustrate is to persuade: to hold up to your view instances of filial piety, is at once to instruct you in your duty, and to allure you to it. And, thanks be to God! degenerate as the world is, history, both profane *b* and sacred, furnishes

a 1 Tim. iv. 8.

b The character of Pius Æneas, which Virgil so repeatedly gives the hero of his poem, on account of his filial attention and duty to his father Anchises, cannot fail of giving pleasure to a reader of sensibility.—Epaminondas, the Thebean general, amidst the flattering applause he received on the victory he gained over the Spartans at Leuctra, said, "my joy chiefly consists in knowing, that my father and mother will hear of my victory."—By the tears of his mother Veturia, the brave Coriolanus was prevailed on to grant peace to Rome, though at the hazard of suffering the resentment of the Volsci, whose troops he commanded in the siege of that city. "Ah! my mother," said he, "you disarm me: Rome is saved, but your son is undone." *Plut. in Coriol.*—In the dreadful proscription that took place in Rome on the arrival of the Triumvirs, Octavianus, Antony, and Lepidus, there was an Oppius who saved his old and infirm father, by carrying him on his shoulders to the sea-side, and escaping with him into Sicily: for which generous action he was afterwards raised to

examples enough to our purpose. We will content ourselves here with citing a few from Scripture.

The reverence which Shem and Japheth expressed for their father's honour, failed not to draw a blessing upon them; as did the contrary behaviour of Ham a curse upon his family *a*. —The entire confidence which Isaac placed in his father Abraham, and the ready submission he yielded to his will on the most trying occasion, were tempers truly admirable, and signally rewarded by Heaven *b*. Jacob acted as became one who had received the blessing at the hand of his venerable parent, when he paid so dutiful a regard to his commands, in the alliance he contracted with the family of Laban. And it was commendable in Esau, whatever might be his character in other respects, to forbear marrying the daughters of Canaan, because he saw it pleased not Isaac his father *c*.

The many expressions of filial duty and affection which occur in the story of Joseph, must strike every attentive reader with admiration and pleasure: nor can we see him distinguished in so extraordinary a manner as he was by the smiles of Providence, without concluding that his piety to his father was highly pleasing to God. The love which good old Jacob bare to him in his tender years, was no doubt heightened by the son's assiduous attention to conform to the will of so indulgent a parent. And as he learned obedience by suffering, (for he was trained in the school of affliction) so he gave the most affecting proofs of it, when elevated to the highest station, next to Pharaoh, in Egypt. How earnestly did he enquire of his brethren,

the Ædileship, and otherwise munificently rewarded by the Roman people. There was also, on the same occasion, an Hosidius, who eluded the search that was to have been made after him, by an artifice which filial tenderness suggested: the son spread a report that his father had laid violent hands on himself, and, to make the fact the more credible, spent his fortune in performing his obsequies.——The Chinese are said to be a people remarkable for filial piety: and I remember to have somewhere met with a striking instance of it. "A Mandarine having been condemned to death for some crime committed by him in his office, his son, a child of only fifteen years, besought the Emperor that he might suffer in his stead. The Emperor, moved with this uncommon instance of filial affection, gave the father his life. And he would have conferred some tokens of honour on the son, but the son declined them, saying, he would not accept any distinction which should recall to him the idea of a guilty father."

a Gen. ix. 20—27. *b* Gen. xxii. 1—19. *c* Gen. xxviii. 1—9.

when they came to buy corn of him, after the welfare of his father!—*Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive a?* What a tender message did he send to him by his brethren, entreating him to come down to Egypt, and assuring him that *he should be near him, and he would nourish him lest he should come to poverty b!* What respect did he shew him by meeting him, in his chariot with his proper attendants, at Goshen! and what ardent affection, by falling on his neck, and weeping on it for a considerable time *c*! How did he pride himself in the honour of presenting his aged parent to Pharaoh! and how happy was he in making him so princely a provision for the remainder of his days! In short, filial affection, reverence and obedience, stampt his whole conduct to the end of life. When he presented his children to their grandfather to receive his dying blessing, *he bowed himself with his face to the earth d.* When he had performed the last tender office of closing his eyes in death, *he fell upon his face, and wept upon him, and kissed him e.* And the dear remains of his venerable parent he failed not to attend to the land of Canaan, and to deposit them in the sepulchre of his ancestors, with every possible expression of genuine sorrow and affectionate respect.

So extraordinary a character as Moses is not to be passed over in silence, and the rather, as a remarkable circumstance occurs in his story to justify the inference, that he was particularly attentive to the duties we have been recommending. The circumstance I refer to was the respect he paid to Jethro his father-in-law, when he made him a visit in the wilderness. *Moses went out to meet him, and did obeisance, and kissed him f.* Nor did he content himself with rendering him these external expressions of regard: he listened to the prudent advice which Jethro gave him, *and did all that he had said g.* And thus were the duties of filial obedience, which he so solemnly enjoined on the Israelites, exemplified in his own conduct.

The generous attention, too, of Ruth to her mother Naomi, amidst all that sad reverse of fortune which she suffered in a strange land, is not to be enough admired. Naomi was her

a Gen. xliii. 27. *b* Chap. xlv. 10, 11. *c* Chap. xlvi. 29.
d Chap. xlviii. 12. *e* Chap. l. 1. *f* Exod. xviii. 7.
g Ver. 24.

husband's mother, a widow, childless, and reduced to poverty. In this destitute state she resolves to return to her own country. And it might naturally be expected, considering what is the manner of the world, that Ruth, having lost her husband, Naomi's son, should have no great objection to the parting with his mother. But such is her attachment she will on no account leave her *a*. And how God rewarded her duty and piety the story at large relates: she married into a wealthy family, became the mother of a numerous offspring, and had the great honour of standing on the list of those from whom the Messiah descended.

David was as eminent for his magnanimity and generosity, as for his sincere and fervent piety; and his attention to the safety and repose of his venerable parents, during the cruel persecution he suffered from the house of Saul, affords a striking proof of the one as well as the other. Driven as he was by that infatuated prince into the wilderness, he presented an address on their behalf to the king of Moab, entreating him to grant them an asylum at Mizpeh. 'Let my father and my mother,' says he, 'I pray thee, come forth and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. And he brought them,' it is added, 'before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the hold *b*.'

The next instance to be mentioned, and which we have already adverted to, is Solomon. From the great respect he paid to his mother, when he was grown to man's estate, and had ascended the throne of Israel, it may be fairly concluded, that he held all that duty we have been explaining and enforcing in the greatest reverence. And his dutiful carriage to his parents was one striking proof of that wisdom, for which he is so much celebrated in sacred writ. The particular I refer to was his behaviour to his mother, when she demanded an audience of him. It is said, 'the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand *c*.'

The obedience of the Rechabites to the commands of Jonadab their father, and in instances too of a very self-denial nature, is held up by the prophet Jeremiah to the view of the Jews, in

a Ruth i. 16, 17. *b* 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4. *c* 1 Kings ii. 19.

order to expose the exceeding great undutifulness of their carriage towards God, who had acted the part of a father towards them. Jonadab had solemnly forbidden their drinking wine all their days, and building houses, and cultivating vineyards and fields, for reasons too particular to be here explained. They were obedient, no temptation could prevail on them to violate their father's commands. Wherefore this message is sent them by the prophet, in the hearing of the Jews. *Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you; therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rachab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever a.*

We might mention other striking examples both in the Old and New Testaments, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ shall suffice. It is said of him, when he was twelve years old, that *he went down with his parents from Jerusalem to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. And he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man b.* And the affectionate attention he paid to them through the whole of his life, may be easily imagined from the tender words which dropped from his lips in the very article of death. Seeing his mother, and the disciple whom he loved, standing by the cross on which he was expiring, he said to her, *Woman, behold thy son;* and then to the disciple, *Behold thy mother:* meaning thereby to commend them to each others cordial regards. And the sacred historian immediately adds, *From that hour that disciple took her unto his own house c.* How admirable an example this! And what a deep sense must our Saviour have had upon his mind of the importance of filial duty, thus solemnly to enjoin it, in effect upon us all, with his expiring breath!

Thus have we urged upon children the duties they owe their parents, by arguments drawn from *the light of nature—the express command of God*—and *the examples of persons eminent for wisdom, virtue, and piety.* Weigh these arguments, children, we beseech you, and resist the force of them if you can. Should you, however, be insensible to them, you will forfeit all claim to humanity and good sense, as well as religion. On the

a Jer. xxxv. 18, 19. b Luke ii. 51, 52. c John xix. 25—27.

contrary, should you feel their force, and be disposed cordially to *obey your parents in the Lord*, we are authorized by the word of God to assure you, that it shall be well with you in this world, and in that which is to come.

DISCOURSE VII.

DUTIES OF SERVANTS TO MASTERS.

EPH. VI. 5—8.—*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.*

HAVING considered the duties of parents and children, we proceed to explain and enforce those of masters and servants. Previous to this it will be necessary to enquire into the true origin and grounds of this relation. The discussion of this question will throw a light upon our subject, and prepare us to receive the apostolic instructions in our text.

Here then we shall lay down the following positions, which have an evident connection with and dependance on each other —Men, as men, are equal—Their condition in life is various and unequal—They are not sufficient to their own support, and therefore stand in need of one another's assistance—But effectual assistance can only be rendered in a way that requires authority on the one part, and obedience on the other—Authority and obedience are, however, the result of voluntary agreement—And, where these are properly adjusted, there will be a pretty equal distribution of happiness.

I. *Men, as men, are equal.*

What I mean is, that we all possess one common nature, and

therefore the rights and duties of humanity are common to all. Every individual, whether a prince or a peasant, derives from the same stock, is composed of the same constituent parts, is born into the world after the same manner, is nourished alike by the produce of the earth, is alike liable to death, and in the end reduced alike to dust and corruption. We are all formed on one plan, possessed of the same faculties and passions, capable of the same joys and sorrows, subject to the same wants and casualties, and are all alike amenable at the tribunal of God, who is no respecter of persons, but will deal with men according to their moral and religious character, and not their external dignity, power, or wealth. *He hath made of one blood*, says the apostle to the Athenians, *all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth a.* To the like purpose Solomon tells us, *The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all b.* So Job, when speaking of the humane treatment his servants had met with at his hands, adds, *Did not he that made me in the womb, make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb c?* As if he had said, masters and servants, considered as men, are equal.

It follows, therefore, that the claims of mankind upon one another are equal: that is, the law of nature is universal, and equally binding on all. Whatever I have a right, as a man, to require of another, that he has a right to require of me. The obligations of truth, justice, compassion, benevolence, and gratitude are common to men of every rank, those in the most exalted and those in the most inferior stations of life. For, being all formed on one scale, and evidently designed for social connections, that which a man by a kind of impulse of nature feels himself disposed to expect and demand from his neighbour, he cannot but instantly perceive his neighbour, in the like circumstances, is entitled to from him. From this law, therefore, which arises out of a sameness of nature, no man is, or can be, exempted. So that you see all men, as such, are equal.—But then,

II. *Their condition in life is various.*

This is true in regard of *mind*, *body*, and *estate*.—Though men are all endowed with the same natural *faculties*, yet there

a Acts xvii. 26. b Prov. xxii. 2. c Job xxxi. 15.

is a manifest difference in the strength, vigour, and extent of them. Some possess a more lively imagination than others, some a more penetrating judgment, and some a more retentive memory. And the effect is prodigious in matters of science, business, and art. One man shall easily comprehend a point, which another can scarce form any idea about. One shall almost instantly compass an object, which another of slow understanding cannot arrive at but by long and tedious steps. There is also an amazing variety in the geniuses of mankind, which are evidently adapted to different pursuits, all which have their use in society. The truth of these observations, which might be branched out into innumerable particulars, must strike every one who is at all conversant with the world.

The *body* too, though framed in the general upon the same plan, has a great variety in its appearance and construction. Not to speak of the senses, some of which are quicker and stronger in one man than another, how do people differ in size, strength, agility, animal spirits, and the like! Some of robust constitutions are equal to the most painful labours, while others of a tender delicate frame are quickly overpowered with every trifling exertion.

And then as to men's *worldly circumstances*, these are as various, if not more so than their powers of body and mind. Some are rich and others poor. Some possess large estates, accumulated wealth, splendid titles, and extensive dominion: while others have very little property, move in contracted spheres, and pass their lives in obscurity. And between the two extremes of great opulence and wretched poverty the degrees are almost innumerable. So that the capacities and conditions of mankind, whereby they are fitted for various departments of life, are diversified beyond a possibility of minute description. The truth of all these facts is not to be disputed.

But it will be enquired how this happens? A very proper question this to be adverted to here, in order to check the pride of superiors on the one hand, and to reconcile inferiors to their stations on the other. The former are too apt to look on the latter as a species of beings below them, and so to treat them with inhumanity and contempt; and these again too apt to consider the other as possessing more than their share, and so a fit

prey for depredation, when opportunity offers. But it will be found on reflection, that as inferiors have the same natural rights with superiors, and therefore ought to be treated with humanity; so this inequality of condition we are here speaking of, is the result of the wise disposition of divine Providence, and therefore ought to be acquiesced in. Who can doubt that the powers of nature, both mental and corporeal, however capable of being improved and enlarged by culture and use, are the gifts of God? If therefore he withholds understanding and sagacity from some, and strength and agility from others, who shall complain, since he does no other than he has a right to do? And so as to wealth, however it is acquired, provided it is got honestly, it is the fruit of his munificence. He possesses men of the means of becoming prosperous, and he crowns those means with success. Wherefore they who have more property than others, have a right to the peaceable enjoyment of it: and they who have less are not authorized by a pretence of want to make encroachments on their neighbours.—As it is God then that hath made men, in regard of the rights of nature, equal; so it is he that hath made them, in regard of condition, unequal.

III. *Individuals are not sufficient to their own support, and therefore stand in need of one another's assistance.*

Every one must, every one does feel, that he cannot subsist of himself without foreign support. And of whom are men, under God, to expect aid but of fellow-men, those with whom they are intimately connected in society, and who have it in their power, by possessing various capacities, and filling various stations, to be mutually beneficial to each other? Inferiors require the aid of superiors, and naturally look up to them for it; the ignorant to the wise for instruction, the weak to the strong for support, and the poor to the rich for charity. And it is as true on the other hand, that superiors need the assistance of inferiors. The rich cannot do without the poor. Let a man possess the largest share of wealth, it can do him little good, if others are indisposed to help him. He cannot by his own personal exertions procure the conveniencies, if the necessaries of life: and of what use is his money, if it will not purchase him the fruit of other men's labours? But this it

will do, as multitudes cannot subsist without an exchange of labour for property. Hence it is a maxim among commercial men, that the industrious poor are the riches of any country; for trade and manufactures, which are the grand sources of wealth, owe their support to them. Here a great variety of instances might be mentioned, wherein persons of all ranks and conditions are mutually benefited by each others assistance. But that which is the object of this discourse shall suffice. Domestic affairs cannot be managed without the aid of servants. The heads of families therefore will look out for proper persons to fill their several departments of service. And those again, whose inferior condition of life makes it necessary to procure support by ministering to those above them, will cheerfully offer their service for a proportionable reward.

And now this being the case, the wisdom of divine Providence in endowing men with such different capacities, and in distributing property to them in such various proportions, cannot be enough admired. If the conditions of all men were equal, it would be difficult to conceive how the community could subsist. It is, however, certain, that the aggregate sum of worldly happiness would not, in that case, be so considerable as it is. And then it is further to be observed, that as this inequality of condition qualifies and disposes men to assist each others temporal interests, so it is often productive of great good to them in regard of their nobler interests. Their virtues are hereby tried, exercised, and improved, such as humility, meekness, contentment, and patience, on the one hand; and humanity, condescension, sympathy, and benevolence, on the other. And thus are they enabled the better to struggle with the various and unavoidable vicissitudes of the present life, and gradually fitted for the noble and permanent joys of another.—This leads us to observe,

IV. That *the assistance which men thus mutually stand in need of, can only be rendered in a way that requires authority on the one part, and obedience on the other.*

If the conditions of mankind are, as we have seen, various, the assistance they require of each other must be various too. It is the business of the wise to instruct the ignorant, of the strong to help the weak, and of the rich to communicate to the

poor. But these offices (under which general ideas an infinite number besides are comprehended) cannot be rendered, unless the former are allowed under certain restrictions to exercise authority, command, and dominion; and the latter are disposed to yield attention, submission, and obedience. How can the master, for instance, teach, unless he has authority to command the attention and implicit regard of the scholar? How can those of mature age, and who possess superior strength, cherish the young, support the feeble, and defend the weak, without the uncontrolled exertion of that force with which they are endowed to these salutary ends? And how is it to be expected that the rich, who have an undoubted right, as we have shewn, to the property they hold, should part with a portion of it to the poor; if these are not disposed to make a proportionable return of service, or at least an humble and grateful acknowledgement of the obligations they hereby incur? Dismiss all idea of pre-eminence, authority, command and government; and of their opposites, docility, submission, obedience and servitude; and there will be an end to the intercourses of society; men must in that case subsist, if subsist at all, in a cold, lonely, perilous unhappy condition.—But then,

V. *Authority and obedience are the result of voluntary compact.*

Men's wants naturally lead them into social connections, which make rule and order necessary: but they are born free. Every man has a right to dispose of himself in respect of all the concerns of life as he pleases, provided he does not injure his neighbour. Nor can any one justly demand service of another against his consent. The case is indeed otherwise with children, idiots, and lunatics: they are not *sui juris*, and therefore it is an act of humanity and justice to exercise compulsory authority over them. But men possessed of their reason are free. Freedom however is subject to certain restrictions, which restrictions, as they are the result of either tacit or express agreement, do not injure but improve and confirm it. When men enter into society, they agree to vest in persons chosen for that purpose, the power of defending them against foreign enemies, and finally to determine quarrels among themselves. So they part with a certain portion of

their natural rights to others, in order to secure to themselves a good to which they are not in their individual capacity competent. And thus government, which becomes necessary in consequence of human imperfection and depravity, rises into existence. Now every one born in society tacitly acknowledges, by accepting the protection and benefit of government, his voluntary submission to it. And so he is bound; but in no way, you see, prejudicial to his natural rights. When, however, he violates the just laws of society to which he has thus consented, he forfeits his freedom. But fulfilling his agreement, he is in all other respects as free as in a state of nature.

Whether a foreign enemy, becoming a conqueror, may justly demand servitude of the vanquished, is a question we shall not stay here particularly to consider. We must however just observe, that in many instances the cause of the conqueror is itself unjust, and of consequence his demands oppressive; and in most cases the lower people are not at all accessory to the dispute, and so do not deserve to be deprived of their liberty.

But it is of the rights of masters and servants in a domestic capacity that we are here speaking. And these are, no doubt, the result of voluntary compact or agreement. No man has a right, because he possesses more than his neighbour, to compel him to become his servant. Nor has another a right, because of his poverty, to force his service on the rich. Indeed, upon the general grounds of humanity, the former is an object of the charitable regard of the latter, and having received his bounty he ought to be thankful. But authority and obedience take place in consequence of a direct and positive contract. The master stipulates with the servant, for such and such services to pay him such and such wages; and the servant stipulates with the master, for such and such wages to render him such and such services. And so the master has a just right to exercise authority over the servant, and the servant is obliged to yield obedience to the master. And indeed not only justice requires that there should be such agreement between the two parties, but interest also. For if there be not good will on both sides, neither the one nor the other are likely to be benefited by this important connection.—And this leads us to the,

VI. And last proposition, That *where these matters are properly adjusted, there will be a pretty equal distribution of happiness.*

The welfare of individuals is, or ought to be, the object of all civil and domestic arrangements. The aggrandizing one to the degradation of another, for the purpose of gratifying avarice and ambition, is unjust and inhuman. Why should one be an absolute despot, and another an abject slave? Nature revolts at the idea. Every one has a right to as much happiness as his character, abilities, and station of life are capable of procuring him. And if in this relation between masters and servants, the contract is founded in equity and good faith, and there is a hearty good will on both sides, it is scarce possible that either party should miss of the end proposed. There will be mutual concord, peace, and contentment. And indeed regard, cultivated by the mild and humane use of authority on the one hand, and by an attentive cheerful obedience on the other, will pretty generally, in a course of time, ripen into a cordial and lasting friendship and affection.

And from hence it follows that there is, or at least if the voice of reason were duly regarded there would be, a more equal partition of happiness among mankind than is commonly apprehended. Through the mistaken estimates which men have formed of superior and inferior stations of life, and through the miserable abuse of the rights and duties of these relations, too many have come to conceive of authority and dominion, as the real and only sources of happiness; and of servitude and obedience, as necessarily subjecting men to contempt and wretchedness. But if the light in which we have placed the matter is just, a sensible and sober man would be almost at a loss to determine which station upon the whole is most eligible—So equally has a wise and good Providence distributed happiness among mankind! If more bodily pain and labour falls to the share of the servant than the master, the servant has however less care and anxiety to disturb his peace. He has no weighty concern to exercise his sagacity, attention, and patience. Having done his duty, and by honest labour contributed to his own health, he may eat his bread with a peculiar relish, enjoy his rest without interruption, and have the comfort too of hoping

that he has attached the affections of his master to himself, and may reap some extraordinary advantages from thence in time to come. Let no one therefore be offended at the idea of authority, as if it monopolized the sum-total of human happiness; nor at servitude, as if it sunk men beneath the species into a condition of wretchedness and contempt.

Thus we see then—Men, as men, are equal—Their condition in life is unequal—They are not sufficient to their own support, and therefore stand in need of each others assistance—But effectual assistance can only be rendered by the due exercise of authority on the one part, and obedience on the other—Authority and obedience are, however, the result of voluntary agreement—And, where these are properly adjusted, there will be a pretty equal distribution of happiness.

Such are the grounds of the relation between masters and servants, and of the obligations they owe to each other. And it is upon these principles the admonitions to the latter in our text, and to the former in the verse following, are founded. We should now, therefore, proceed to explain the apostolic exhortation to servants, and so go on to a more particular consideration of the several duties of this character, and the motives to urge men to the practice of them. But this we must refer to the next sermon, and content ourselves at present with two or three remarks, which the perfect agreement there is between the dictates of nature and the language of the text and context suggests.

The first is, that they very injuriously misrepresent the Christian institution who insinuate, that it countenances a levelling principle in society. Nothing can be clearer than that it every where recommends decency, regularity, and subordination among mankind. This is the plain language of the text and the verse following it, in regard of domestic arrangements. The distinction of masters and servants is not confounded, but on the contrary marked with the greatest precision. The latter, whatever real dignity their Christian character may confer on them, are required to behave towards the former, though infidels, in the most respectful manner, remembering the different ranks they hold in the community. 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters, (that is, masters who are un-

believers, as the context plainly shews) worthy of all honour; that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed *a*.' And again, 'Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward *b*.' They are also cautioned against treating their masters, because fellow Christians, with indecent freedom. 'They that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit *c*.' This levelling principle then, which some have palmed upon the Christian institution, is totally without foundation. It is a fact that men hold different ranks and stations in life: it is the will of Providence that it should be so, in order to answer purposes of utility and importance to themselves and society; and agreeably to this wise arrangement of things, and without any censure thereon, they are addressed in the Bible.

It is further to be remarked, that as the New Testament asserts the rights of superiors, so it is alike attentive to the claims of inferiors. It does not court the regards of the rich and mighty, to the injury or neglect of the poor and helpless. It teaches that men, as men, are equal; that they are all subject to the same laws, and are all alike amenable at the tribunal of the great God, who is no respecter of persons. And it not only warns those in exalted stations against acts of injustice and oppression, but earnestly persuades them to those of condescension, humanity, and benevolence. This is the general tenor of the Bible: and it is enough to refer you to the text, wherein we have the cause of the servant pleaded with the same impartial regards as that of the master.

From this view, then, of the morality of the Scriptures, we derive a presumptive proof of their truth. And that proof is considerably augmented, when we reflect that the duties of morality are not only here happily explained and strictly enjoined, but that they have here a further and nobler support than the law of nature can afford them. What I mean is, that the gospel is so constructed as at once to throw light upon our duty, and to possess us of new and extraordinary motives to persuade us to a compliance with it. To apply this idea to the matter

a 1 Tim. vi. 1. *b* 1 Pet. ii. 18. *c* 1 Tim. vi. 2.

before us. The reciprocal duties of masters and servants must be acknowledged, when examined only by the light of nature, to be right, fit, and mutually beneficial. But the Christian scheme, when properly understood, enables us more clearly to apprehend than we otherwise could the substantial difference between right and wrong; and by the noble temper it inspires powerfully animates us to the duties of fidelity, submission, and obedience on the one hand, and of condescension, gentleness, and love on the other. And so it is of infinite use in explaining and enforcing the mutual obligations of masters and servants. This is an observation we may have an opportunity more fully to consider and illustrate hereafter. And, if it be found to be true, it will have no small weight, in concurrence with the external evidence of the gospel, to prove the Christian institution divine.

PART II.

We have considered the true grounds of this important relation between masters and servants, and now go on to explain the admonition in our text, which is founded on the principles laid down in the last sermon. So we shall proceed more particularly to state the duties of servants, and to point out their obligations to them; and then, in the succeeding discourse, to explain the duties of masters, and with proper arguments to enforce them.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

In order to the right understanding of the words, we will cast the several particulars contained in them under the three following general heads—First, the persons addressed:—Secondly, the duties enjoined, and the qualifications of them:—And thirdly, the motives to enforce them.

First, The persons addressed are *Servants*.

These are described as *bond* or *free*. By bond-servants are

meant slaves, who became such by being taken in war, or by being born in captivity, or by having for certain considerations sold their freedom. And by *free* are meant hired servants, who were of much the same description with servants in this and other free countries. Of the former there were many among the Romans, and their state was considered as very abject and wretched, though they sometimes met with masters who treated them with great humanity.

But it should here be observed, that it does not follow from the apostle's admonishing bond-servants or slaves how to behave themselves in this humiliating situation, that he meant to countenance the tyranny commonly exercised over them. The truth is, the gospel where it came did not interfere with the civil government, or by any forcible exertions make a change in men's external condition. Yet it by no means authorizes the unjust invasion of men's natural rights. The apostle, who thus indiscriminately addresses all servants, himself knew the value of freedom, and with no small spirit on more occasions than one asserted it *a*. And in his epistle to the Corinthians he exhorts those servants *who may be made free*, to take the proper measures to that end *b*.—The admonition then in our text is addressed to all servants, whether *bond* or *free*.

Secondly, We are next to consider the duties enjoined, and the qualifications of them.

1. The duties enjoined are comprehended in the terms *obedience—service*—and *doing good*.

Servants be obedient to your masters. Or, as it is elsewhere expressed, *Obey them in all things c*. Comply with their will in all things that are within the compass of your ability, and do not affect your conscience towards God; especially in those matters that belong to your particular province, and which by your original contract you bound yourselves to attend to.—*Service* is another term used to express what is required of them. They are *to do them service*, to wait on them, to minister to them, to assist and defend them. There are offices peculiar to certain departments; these should be more especially regarded: and not only these but every other office that occasion may require, and that is within their power.—Again, they are *to do them*

a Acts xvi. 37. xxii. 25, 28. *b* 1 Cor. vii. 21. *c* Col. iii. 22.

good. A comprehensive term this! Servants are to be benefactors to their masters, to make their welfare their object, and to contrive every possible way to promote their interest.

2. The qualifications of these duties, or the temper in which they are to be discharged, are particularly described.

Masters are to be obeyed *with fear and trembling.* This may intend the caution that should be on the minds of servants, lest they fail in the obedience they owe their masters; and the reverence in which they should hold their persons and commands, and which is to resemble that caution which accompanies obedience *to Christ:* and thus all that forwardness and indecent familiarity is forbidden, which breeds contempt, and by bringing both parties on a level, defeats the end of this important relation. So the apostle Peter says, *Servants be subject to your masters with all fear a.* Or perhaps this *fear and trembling* may mean the concern they should feel, lest, by any negligence or unfaithfulness in the management of their master's affairs, they should bring a reproach upon their Christian profession. For there may be a reference to an after-clause, thus, *Be obedient to them with fear and trembling, as unto Christ,* as becometh Christians, those who have the highest reverence for that sacred name. So the apostle, in another place, exhorts servants to *shew all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things b:* and to *count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed c.*

Singleness of heart is next mentioned. By which is meant simplicity, sincerity, and uprightness; in opposition to guile, duplicity, and cunning. And obedience, in these regards of it likewise, is to be rendered *as unto Christ:* it is to be sincere, artless, and uniform, like that which he demands, and such as is most agreeable to the genuine spirit and tendency of his doctrine.

Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers d. Too many servants

a 1 Pet. ii. 18. *b* Tit. ii. 10. *c* 1 Tim. vi. 1.

d It has been observed here by some critical expositors, that as the original words the apostle uses, ὀφθαλμοδουλειαν and ανθρωπαρεσκοι, are compound words, so our translators have happily imitated the original by the use of compound words also.

attend to their business only while their master's eye is upon them, thinking to secure their regards by an appearance of industry, though they are in fact careless and indolent. This therefore is forbidden. On the contrary, they are required to acquit themselves *as the servants of Christ*, with all that fidelity which he hath positively enjoined, and with which he expects to be served himself: *doing the will of God from the heart*, aiming sincerely to approve themselves to him, whose eye is constantly upon them, and who cannot be deceived though their masters may.

To which is added the further idea of serving them cheerfully as well as faithfully, *with good will doing service*, taking delight in their duty, and accounting themselves happy in promoting their master's interests: doing service to them, *as to the Lord, and not to men*, that is, with a cordiality like that which enters into the essence of such service as is acceptable to God. —Thus admirably does the apostle describe the temper in which servants are to discharge the duties of their station. And in language similar to this he addresses them, in his epistle to the Colossians, *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh: not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men* a.

Thirdly, We have next the motives to enforce these duties.

The first is taken from the authority of the blessed God. It is *his will* that servants should obey their masters in the manner they are here admonished. The duty enjoined approves itself to every one's sober reason, and the voice of reason is the voice of God. But more than this, it has, coming from the inspired pen of an apostle, the sanction of a direct positive command—*Servants, obey your masters, doing the will of God*, or as it is in the parallel place, *fearing God*.

The next motive is taken from the obligations they owe to Christ: such servants as are Christians are *the servants of Christ*, and in their obedience they are to have regard *to Christ —to the Lord*. And by thus expressing himself, the apostle no doubt meant to remind them of the obedience which Christ, as a man, had faithfully rendered to God; and of the essential ser-

a Col. iii. 22, 23.

vices he had hereby most cordially rendered to them. Though *he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant a*, that he might redeem and save them. They were therefore bound, by every imaginable tie of love and gratitude, to comply with his will. They are too by profession *the servants of Christ:* to him, as their master, they have voluntarily submitted themselves, and are therefore obliged by their own engagements to conform to his precepts, of which this of obedience to their masters according to the flesh is one.

The third and last motive is taken from considerations of interest. Be obedient to your masters, *knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* The offices required of servants are all of them *good*, fit and right in themselves, and truly commendable and praise-worthy. But it is possible they may not, in some instances, receive those returns from men which they deserve. Be that however as it may, they are assured that Christ, of his great mercy, will not fail to reward them. So all the comforts of religion in this life, and all the joys consequent upon it in another, are held up to their view as arguments to persuade them to the faithful discharge of their duty. To the same purpose the apostle expresses himself in that other passage before referred to, *knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ b.*

Thus have we explained the admonition in our text, and now proceed to consider more particularly the duties incumbent on *Servants*, and to enforce them with suitable arguments.

The duties of Servants, in regard both of the *Matter* and the *Manner* of them, are all comprehended in the general idea of *Obedience.* We propose therefore to consider,

First, The *Service itself* that is demanded of them, and their *Obligations* to it; and,

Secondly, The *Manner* in which it is to be rendered, and their *Obligations* to comply with the several rules which will here be laid down.

First, Let us consider the *Duty itself* that is required of servants, and their *Obligations* in general to obedience.

a Phil. ii. 6, 7. b Col. iii. 24.

The name *servant*, by which they are described, is expressive of the help or assistance they are to render their masters. They are to wait upon them, to minister to them, to support and defend them. But the kinds of service required of them are so diversified that we cannot, nor indeed is it to our purpose particularly to enumerate them. In large families there are various departments of service, and in smaller the whole business of the house falls upon two or three, or one only. It is however here to be observed, that whatever rank the servant holds in the family, the general interest of the master is to be his object.

Now the service due from persons in this relation, is of a different denomination from that which men who are in the same line of life owe to one another. It is to be considered as the result of that authority which their masters have over them, and is therefore properly described by the term *Obedience*. It is the master's province to command, the servant's to obey. And the obedience is to be universal. *Servants*, says the apostle, *obey your masters in all things* [a]. But this requisition is to be understood with certain limitations. These therefore we shall mention, and all those commands which do not fall within these restrictions, are to be punctually and unreservedly complied with. There are three cases wherein a servant may be justified in refusing obedience to his master's commands.

1. When the master's commands are contrary to the commands of God.

The authority of the great God is infinitely superior to that of any man on earth. He is our master in a more absolute sense than any one else can possibly be. When therefore the will of any superior clashes with his will, it is on no account to be complied with. Supposing, for instance, a master commands a servant to speak an untruth, to be an accomplice with him in a fraudulent bargain, to break the sabbath, or to profane divine institutions, he is peremptorily to refuse. For obedience in any such cases would bring guilt on his conscience, and subject him to infinitely greater evils than he could possibly suffer from the resentments of an earthly master, however powerful he may be. And as servants are reasonable creatures, and accountable to God for their conduct, so they are to judge for themselves of

[a] Col. iii. 22.

the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any command they receive from their superiors. But then they are to look well to it, that they do not, under pretence of conscience, but really from motives of sloth and self-gratification, withhold obedience to their master's just commands. For in such case they contract double guilt, that of violating their duty to man, and to God also.

2. They are justified in disobeying their master's commands, when they are required to do what is not within their power.

Such unreasonable masters as these there have been: such was Pharaoh who demanded bricks of the Israelites, while he withheld from them the necessary materials for making them. But in these cases there can be nothing criminal in disobedience, because the contrary is impossible. Nor is there any criminality in men's not attempting what they are not competent to. But then it too often so happens that servants, through a slothful disposition, do not exert themselves as they might; and so pretend incapacity when the fault is not in their ability but their will. This is a very great evil, and the complaints of such servants, as if their master's commands were rigorous, and therefore ought to be disobeyed, are groundless. Masters, however, should be cautious that they do not impose unreasonable burdens on their servants; always bearing in mind the golden rule, *to do unto others, as we would have others do unto us.*—There is one more instance which will justify the not complying with a master's commands, and that is,

3. When such service is demanded as falls not within the compass of the servant's agreement.

There are various departments of service, as we have observed, in some families: and when servants engage to do the business of one of them exclusively of all other business, and receive wages for such duty only, it is unreasonable, and a breach of covenant, to force them beyond that line. Wherefore, noncompliance on their part is not to be construed into disobedience. But then that general good-will which servants owe to their masters, and to one another, should dispose them on particular occasions to go beyond their own proper province in a family, in order to be helpful to the whole. And as in most cases such occasional assistance is supposed to come within the compass of their original agreement, an obstinate refusal is an argument of

want of temper, if it may not be deemed downright disobedience. It cannot, however, be doubted that a disrespectful manner of treating such commands, though the service itself be not strictly due, is a breach of duty. And here servants should be cautioned, as under the former particulars, against the great evil of making frivolous pretences an occasion of indulging sloth and ill-nature: and heads of families too should be careful that they do not push their requisitions beyond the bounds of reason and prudence.

And now these three instances of non-compliance with a master's commands being admitted as lawful, all his other commands are no doubt to be punctually obeyed. *Servants, obey your masters in all things.* The centurion, of whom we read in the gospel, was not a hard master, as may be concluded from the honourable character our Saviour himself gives him. And what is the language he holds? It is in perfect unison with the passage just mentioned. 'I am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it *a*.' A master's commands are to be obeyed in every instance, whether they respect matters of moment, or those only of an indifferent and trifling nature. Disobedience, indeed, in the former case may be more essentially injurious to his interests than in the latter, and the guilt of the servant be thereby aggravated. But a failure of duty in the smallest instance, when it proceeds from contempt of his authority, is alike criminal. Nor is difference of opinion, whether right or wrong, or disinclination to the business, let it proceed from what cause it will, to over-rule the decisive commands of a master, provided, as we have observed before, they are lawful commands. A servant may very properly speak his mind upon any matter, so he does it respectfully: but he is to remember that his master's judgment is to determine, though it be contrary to his own, and there be no reason assigned for it. And however a desire of ease may sometimes put him on excusing himself of a service that is painful and laborious, yet, when positively required, a sense of duty should get the better of sloth and self-indulgence. And thus the will of the master is to be the governing rule of

a Luke vii. 8.

the servant's conduct, in every instance that does not come within the restrictions we just now mentioned.

We proceed now to consider the *Obligations* which servants are under to such universal obedience.

1. It is *fit and right* that servants should obey their masters in all things.

The relation between masters and servants is founded on principles of equity and mutual convenience, as we have shewn at large in the preceding sermon. The reasoning is in short this. Men, as men, are equal: but their condition in life is various and unequal. Not being able to subsist of themselves, they need one another's assistance. But effectual assistance cannot be rendered by inferiors to their superiors, if the latter have not a right to command, and the former are not obliged to obey: for how can a person be served to his satisfaction, if he may not direct in what manner he will be served? And how can he be sure of receiving any service at all, if he has not authority to require it? Wherefore, the servant agrees, for a valuable consideration, to submit himself to the will of the master. And thus the relation clearly appears to be founded on principles of equity and mutual convenience. Now, when the servant refuses obedience to the master, the end proposed by the character he sustains is defeated, his own positive engagements are violated, and the relation itself is dissolved. Wherefore it is fit and right that servants should obey their masters. And the reasoning extends to *universal* obedience. For if a servant is at liberty to determine for himself, just as his own fancy or humour may direct, in what instances he will and in what he will not obey, how can the master be assured that he shall be obeyed at all? If his authority does not reach every case within the limitations just mentioned, it is no authority at all. The precept therefore is most fit and right, 'Servants, obey your masters in all things,' that is, in all things which God your superior master has not forbidden, which are within your power, and which are included in your covenant with them when you became their servants.

2. This, too, is *the express command of God.*

Indeed, whatever is fit and right in itself is unquestionably the will of God. Wherefore as the duty before us has been

proved to be fit and right in itself, it cannot be doubted that it is the will of God. But the Scriptures expressly declare that it is his will: and, as the divine authority will always have a commanding influence on every serious mind, it will be of use to take a general view of what the Bible says upon this matter. Here it is to be remarked, that the obligation of servants to obey their masters is often spoken of in Scripture as a generally acknowledged principle: a mode this of holding up our duty to our view the strongest, perhaps, and most natural that could be used. In such manner the psalmist refers to it, when, speaking of the earnest attention which good men pay to the blessed God, he says, *As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God* a. And the apostle, *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey* b? So Job, taking this as a principle granted, speaks of the disobedience of his servants as one of the many grievous calamities he suffered: *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth* c. As if he had said, "that duty which all men agree is fit and reasonable, is unnaturally and cruelly denied to me." So our Lord speaks of it as a truth of unquestionable authority, that *that servant who knows his Lord's will, and does not conform to it, is deserving of punishment* d. And in another place, having described the servant as making ready his master's supper for him, and girding himself, and serving him, he puts this question as what no one would be at a loss to reply to, *Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not* e. Further, the obligation lying upon servants to obey their masters, is the principle supposed when that character is applied to men in regard of God. Moses was the servant of God, and the apostles the servants of Christ. Who can view them in this character, without instantly affixing the idea of a disposition to conform in all things to the will of their divine master?

But this duty is directly and positively enjoined upon servants. Not to speak of particular instances, such as Hagar's

a Psal. cxxiii. 2. b Rom. vi. 16. c Job xix. 16.
d Luke xii. 47. e Luke xvii. 9.

being commanded *to submit herself to her mistress Sarah a*, and many of the like nature; we all know how frequently obedience is urged by Moses on the Israelitish, and by the apostles on Christian, servants. Particular attention is paid to this matter in the epistles to the Ephesians *b*, Colossians *c*, Timothy *d*, and Titus *e*; and in the general epistle of Peter *f*. It is then the express command of God to you, servants, to obey your masters in all things. And as you cannot doubt that *he* is your master, and has an uncontrolled authority over you, so you are to remember, that the refusing obedience to them is an act of manifest disobedience to *him*.—But,

3. Your duty in this matter is your *interest*.

The happiness of families, and the welfare of the community at large, depend much upon the proper demeanour of servants. Wherefore those of them who have liberality enough to be concerned for the general good, must surely feel a pleasure in contributing to it, by acquitting themselves aright in this important station. And if they have an affection, as they certainly ought to have, for the families they serve, the idea of being the instruments of making them happy must afford them no small satisfaction. But an unreserved obedience to the will of their masters has a direct influence on their happiness. Service thus rendered will be more easy to themselves, than that which is clogged with a mistaken and perverse notion, that their opinion and will are sometimes to over-rule those of their superiors. Where such an unnatural competition arises, the business must go on heavily; and the event will quickly be, what indeed it ought to be, a dissolution of the connection. On the contrary, a sense of duty, in that universal idea of it we have been recommending, will soon ripen into an earnest wish to please, this will facilitate labours otherwise irksome, and an obedience thus yielded will not fail to secure the affectionate regards of ingenuous masters, and to draw after them in a course of time other advantages besides those stipulated in the original agreement. How happily have some servants lived, whose conduct has been uniformly regulated by this principle! and how comfortably have they been provided for in the close of their days! They merit

a Gen. xvi. 9. *b* The text. *c* Chap. iii. 22—25.
d 1 Epist. vi. 1, 2. *e* Chap. ii. 9, 10. *f* 1 Epist. ii. 18.

the denomination of wise servants, and Solomon tells us, *A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame: and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren a.* It is their *interest* then, in regard of temporal matters, to obey their masters in all things.

But their *superior interests* more loudly demand such a conduct at their hands. Would they escape the painful reflections which a consciousness of their having wilfully neglected their duty occasions? And would they enjoy the heart-felt pleasure of having not only aimed to please their masters on earth, but their great master in heaven? Let them readily fall in with the admonition in the text. It is a possible thing that they may not, in some instances, receive such a compensation for their obedience from men as they deserve. But God will not be unmindful of them. The apostle particularly assures them of this. Having obeyed their masters in all things, and upon right principles regarded the will of God therein, he promises them, *that of the Lord they shall receive the reward of the inheritance b.* He will by and by raise them from the rank of servants on earth to that of masters, yea of princes, in heaven. To which must be added one further motive to such obedience, and that is,

4. The *credit of* our holy *religion.*

This is an argument addressed to the ingenuous feelings of servants, as the disciples of Christ. And a powerful argument it is! His admonitions to servants the apostle styles *wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and agreeable to the doctrine which is according to godliness: and those who consent not to them,* he represents as *proud, ignorant, and foolish c.* If Christian servants fail in their duty to their masters, he reminds them that hereby *the name of God and his doctrine would be blasphemed d.* And on the contrary he declares, that by discharging their duty properly they would *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour e.* Nothing can be clearer from hence, than that an attempt to destroy all civil distinction in society, and to bring superiors and inferiors on a level, is a direct violation of the commands of God's word. And nothing can be more evident from these passages, than

a Prov. xvii. 2. b Col. iii. 24. c 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.
d Ver. 1. e Tit. ii. 10.

that the genius of the Christian doctrine and institution is favourable to that obedience which we are inculcating upon servants.

Here then the example which Christ has set us in all that humble obedience which as a man he yielded unto God; the great and effectual services he rendered us by his humiliation and death; and the authority he justly claims over us as our master; all these considerations, I say, might be held up to the view of servants to conciliate their minds to that station Providence has allotted them, and to animate them to that obedience to their masters which has been shewn to be in itself fit and reasonable. Are you indebted to the painful labours and agonizing sufferings of Christ, who became the servant of God and man for your sakes; are you, I say, indebted to them for all the substantial comforts you enjoy here, and the noble prospects you have hereafter? Do your breasts burn with love and gratitude to him your divine benefactor? And have you solemnly vowed obedience to him as your master? How then can you wilfully fail in the duty he authoritatively requires of you in the text! and especially as such a failure may prove an occasion of *the name of God and of his doctrine's being blasphemed!* Be persuaded then to obey your masters according to the flesh in all things: and so to *adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour!*

We should now proceed to consider the *Manner* in which this obedience is to be rendered, and to enforce the tempers we mean to recommend with suitable *Motives*. But this we must refer to the next sermon.

PART III.

We have considered at large the *Obedience* itself required of servants, and their *Obligations* to it. And it remains that we now,

Secondly, Consider the *Manner* in which this obedience is to be rendered, and enforce the tempers we wish to inculcate with proper *Motives*.

These are questions that deserve our particular attention: for the acceptableness and utility of the obedience required of servants very much depend on the *Manner* in which it is ren-

dered. What we have here to offer will fall under the following particulars—*Humility*—*Fidelity*—*Diligence*—and *Cheerfulness*.

1. *Humility*.

To be humble, according to the apostle's account of this amiable temper, is *to think soberly of ourselves as we ought to think* a: that is, to conceive of our characters, abilities, and rank in life, agreeably to what they really are, and to conduct ourselves accordingly. Now, although servants are upon an equality with their masters in regard of nature, and may be superior to them in respect of ability for the business they undertake, yet their condition in life is vastly inferior. The master hath property, the servant little or none: the former is in a situation of power and honour, the latter in that of service and dependance: the one has authority to demand obedience, the other is obliged by his own voluntary engagements to render it. It is contrary therefore to all idea of truth, equity, and decency, for a servant to conceive of his master as his equal, and to treat him as such. For persons in this inferior station to affect authority and dominion, is an evil *for which* the wise man tells us, *the earth is disquieted, and which it cannot bear* b. And this inversion of all order he describes by a kind of caricature that cannot fail of exciting disgust, if not ridicule; *I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth* c. It is Providence that has made the difference between the one and the other. The servant ought therefore to give honour to whom honour is due, to cherish in his breast an unfeigned esteem for his master, as his superior, to address him on all occasions most respectfully, to carry himself in his presence with all humility and reverence, to listen in silence to his commands, to comply submissively with his will, and on no account to dispute his just authority over him.

This is in itself right. Difference of character and station requires such deportment: nor can the ends of the relation between master and servant be properly attained without it. Suppose a servant to fancy himself in all respects wiser and better than his master, and totally to overlook the distinction which Providence has created between them; is it imaginable

a Rom. xii. 3. b Prov. xxx. 21, 22. c Eccl. x. 7.

that he would discharge his duty as he ought, either to his own comfort, or his master's satisfaction! What he did he would do grudgingly; and not doing it conformably to his pleasure who hath a right to direct, he would scarce render him any service at all. The voice of decency, custom, and common sense, therefore, speak loudly in favour of a modest, submissive, respectful deportment in servants. The reverse of it never fails to disgust. What servant that is conceited, self-willed, forward, and confident, but injures himself, and essentially too, in the opinion not only of those he serves but of those who frequent the family he belongs to! Sensible people will ever consider such servants as deficient in point of sense and manners, as well as good nature and religion. How much mankind are agreed on this subject, is evident from the similarity of behaviour required of persons in this station in most countries and ages; such as standing in the presence of their superiors, waiting upon them, listening in silence to their commands, not answering again, yielding respectfully to their opinion, and assiduously endeavouring to please. Indeed so congenial is the idea of humility to the character of a servant, that when we adopt this latter term in our epistolary correspondence with one another, we usually add the epithet of *humble* to it.

In Scripture *Humility* and *Service* are almost always used as convertible terms; or, however, we scarce meet with the word servant but this idea rises to our view. So the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, when they speak of themselves as the servants of God, mean thereby to express their absolute submission to his will, and their humble obedience to his commands. To this, as a quality that ought never to be separated from the character of a servant, the blessed God refers when he says, *If I be a master, where is my fear a?* And when the apostle reminds the Ephesians how he had acquitted himself among them as the servant of Christ, he tells them that 'he had served the Lord with all humility of mind *b*.' And when the same apostle would excite the Philippians to 'that lowliness of mind, which induces men to esteem others better than themselves,' he instantly holds up Christ to their view in the character of a servant: 'He made himself,' says he, 'of no reputation,

a Mal. i. 6. *b* Acts xx. 19.

and took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself, and became obedient to death *a*.'

Here we might shew at large, would the time admit, that the genius of the gospel, so strikingly expressed in that great act of condescension just referred to; that the meekness, submission, and readiness to serve one another which are every where recommended in the New Testament, and that the many particular examples of this kind the Bible sets before us, all unite to enforce the duty we are here inculcating upon servants. But there is one very singular fact related of our Saviour, which must not pass unnoticed, and that is, his condescending behaviour to his disciples just before his last sufferings. Though he was their master, yet assuming the character of a servant, 'he laid aside his garment, took a towel and girded himself, poured water into a bason, and, having washed their feet, wiped them with the towel wherewith he was girded:' and then says, 'If I your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet *b*.' Can we any of us, Christians, think of this, and not be disposed to acts of humility? Can Christian servants, more especially, think of this, and not feel the propriety of rendering *humble* obedience to their masters? 'Count them worthy of all honour, even though they are not believers; and if they are believers, take heed how ye despise them *c*,' because as Christians you hold the same rank with them.

2. *Fidelity.*

This is another quality inseparable from the idea of a good servant. The master's interest is to be the servant's object. His person, his character, his family, his habitation and property he is to defend to the utmost of his power, not injuring either of them himself, nor suffering others to injure them. His substance in particular being entrusted to his care, he is not to embezzle it, or waste it, or put any of it without permission to his own use; but to keep it with attention and improve it. The business he is commanded to do is to be done, not superficially, but effectually; and his time is to be considered not as his own but his master's, and to be employed faithfully in his service. His master's secrets he is to keep. All de-

a Phil. ii. 7, 8. *b* John xiii. 4, 5, 14. *c* 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

signs formed against his character, person, or interest, which he happens to come to the knowledge of, he is to disclose, and to use his utmost endeavours to prevent. And every opportunity that offers of forwarding his affairs, he is to seize and improve. In short, his master's honour, safety, and happiness he is in every instance to consult, considering his interest as his own.

And now can any one doubt whether all this is in itself right and fit? If he can, let him reverse what has been said, and suppose us to insist that it is his duty, instead of making his master's interest his object, to be wholly indifferent to it; instead of taking care of his property, to waste and destroy it; and instead of serving him, to injure him. Would not any man's feelings be hurt at such injunctions as these, so contrary to all idea of truth, integrity, and justice? Or if a servant is totally void of principle, and so wretchedly depraved as not to discern the real difference between good and evil, can he suppose it possible that his master should approve such doctrine, or that he himself, if he were a master, would be pleased with such treatment from his servant? Let him consider whether infidelity in servants does not tend directly to the dissolution of the relation between them and their masters, and of consequence to the destruction of all order in society, and to the essential injury as well of the poor as the rich? And let him further consider whether if there be a God, that God does not disapprove of such conduct, and will not sooner or later call men to an account for it?

Fidelity, on the contrary, can scarce be mentioned but it approves itself to every mind. There is a kind of honour that is accounted sacred among the basest of men. They who have been accomplices in schemes of fraud and oppression, have yet considered themselves as bound to one another by a tie, which ought on no account to be torn asunder. And what is this but an acknowledgement on their parts, that honour and good faith are virtues to be regarded in society? So that both good and bad men are agreed on this point. *Fidelity* is what God approves: for he has not only told us by the plain dictates of reason, that he is himself, and indeed cannot but be, most just, true and faithful; but he has condescended expressly to assure us that he is so, by the repeated declarations of his holy prophets

and apostles. And it cannot surely but be agreeable to him, that we should copy after his moral excellencies. *Fidelity* in servants he hath strictly enjoined in innumerable passages, both in the Old and New Testament. It is the direct language of our text, and other similar passages. All guile, duplicity, eye-service, and purloining their master's substance, are peremptorily forbidden. And they are expressly commanded to serve their masters *in singleness of heart, fearing God, and shewing all good fidelity a.* And they are assured that their *fidelity*, rendered on right principles, shall not fail of being rewarded by him. This idea is implied in our Saviour's reasoning on the fidelity we owe to him our divine master: 'Who is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods *b.*' But a recompence is more directly promised to them in the passages where faithfulness is inculcated upon them. 'Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free *c.*' And again, 'Of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance *d.*' But the utility and importance of this most just and reasonable principle merits a more particular consideration.

What inhumanity and baseness must there be in the heart of him who can wilfully injure the man at whose table he is daily fed, and at whose hands he receives the just recompence of his supposed good services! And how very painful and humiliating must the calamity be to masters to sink into poverty and want through the neglect, avarice, and perfidy, not of strangers, but of those who dwell under their roof, and make up a part of their families! On the contrary, as it is in the power of servants by a faithful attention to their duty, to contribute to the honour, ease, and happiness of their masters; how great must their mutual pleasure be in the attainment of these objects! Indeed the very existence of domestic connections, as well as their prosperity and comfort, depend not a little upon the good behaviour of servants. And how much the community at large is affected

a Col. iii. 2.—Tit. ii. 10.
b Matt. xxiv. 45—47.
c Text.
d Col. iii. 24.

hereby, the history of every country sufficiently shews. When profligacy and want of principle universally prevail among this order of men, the most alarming consequences to the state may be naturally apprehended. Whereas peace and prosperity are usually enjoyed when the reverse of this is the character of the times. But then it should here be observed, in justice to the inferior part of society, that corruption among them is most commonly the effect of the ill example set them by their superiors.

But the main consideration we have to offer, as a motive to *fidelity*, is the benefit that results from thence to servants themselves. The pleasures of a peaceful conscience infinitely outweigh all the gratifications, which the lawless abuse of a master's substance or time can possibly procure. How happy to be able to say in an hour of cool reflection, "I have not only been anxious not to injure those I have served, but it hath been my aim to promote their interests to the utmost of my power!" Such a character too cannot fail to secure the affectionate regards of ingenuous masters. It will balance the account with many other failings. And if one situation a faithful servant may be in, does not prove in every respect agreeable, it will be a certain introduction to another. This is a matter of such consequence, that it is the first thing enquired after, and every other good quality may be dispensed with rather than this. In short, he who consults his interest both as to this life and another, will resolve to be *honest*, and not only to be so in the general idea of that term, but to make his master's interest his own.

Striking examples might here be adduced to illustrate what we have been recommending. But, among the many that occur in Scripture, we must content ourselves with little more than the bare mention of a few only, intreating servants to dwell more particularly on them in their meditations. How faithfully did Abraham's servant execute his master's commands respecting Isaac, in the matter of his marriage, and so fulfil the oath he had taken to him *a*! Joseph's fidelity in the house of Potiphar cannot be enough applauded: and however this extraordinary instance of domestic virtue was for a while eclipsed by the thick and lowering clouds of adversity, yet it quickly shone out

a Gen. xxiv.

amidst the splendours of unexampled prosperity and glory *a*. Moses was the servant of God, and had the honourable attestation of his divine Master to his character, that *he was faithful in all his house as a servant b*. This honour too the prophets and apostles repeatedly enjoyed. And if such examples may receive any illustration from their opposites, I might mention that of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who for his wretched infidelity and avarice entailed upon himself and his family that very disease of which Naaman was cured, and in whose opinion by his unfaithfulness he had cruelly abused the character of his innocent master *c*. To which I might add the deplorable instance of Judas, who for his treachery to the best of masters drew down the most tremendous vengeance on his guilty head *d*. But these gloomy ideas we would expel from the minds of those we mean affectionately to allure to their duty, by holding up to their view the illustrious character of Jesus of Nazareth, of whom it was prophesied that as 'he should be the servant of God to raise up the tribes of Jacob, so righteousness should be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins *e*.' And those servants who have believed his doctrine, and entered into the spirit of it, though previous to this they were void of all principle, have become sincere, honest, and faithful. Onesimus before his conversion was unprofitable to his master Philemon: but afterwards, was profitable both to him, and to the apostle Paul, by whom he was begotten in his bonds at Rome *f*.—But it is time we now hasten to the third particular,

3. *Diligence.*

By diligence we mean applying in earnest to the work we undertake, setting about it with all our might, losing no time in the prosecution of it, and labouring at it with patience and perseverance till we have accomplished it. The great importance of this in every affair of life is acknowledged by all prudent sensible people. For however acute and ingenious a person may be, he will make no progress in any art or science if he does not apply. Knowledge is not to be acquired without hard study, nor wealth ordinarily without industry. And how unfavourable

a Gen. xxxix. 40, &c. *b* Heb. iii. 5. *c* 2 Kings v. 20.—ult.
d Matt. xxvii. 3—5. *e* Isa. xlix. 6. xl. 5. *f* Philem. ver. 10, 11.

sloth is to religion every one must be sensible who has any acquaintance with it.

But we are here speaking of the duty of servants: and, next to fidelity, *diligence* surely is the principal excellence in their character. Both their *master's* and *their own interest* are concerned therein. It is for their service they are hired and rewarded: and as they should understand the business they covenant to do, so they should do it well. But it cannot be done well, if it is not minded. To this end therefore their affairs should be arranged in an orderly manner, and every office regularly succeed each other. A reasonable time being allowed for food, sleep, recreation, and the duties of religion, not a moment of the remainder should be lost. All trifling, sauntering, and loitering should be avoided, and especially idle company, which is the bane of domestic happiness and fidelity. When once servants become slothful, it is much if they do not become artful and intriguing. However, having no other object than their ease and pleasure, their master's commands will be disobeyed, or at most the service they render him will be what the text calls *eye-service*, the order of the house will be neglected, its substance wasted, its affairs run into confusion, and in the end the family ruined. On the contrary, where each servant minds his proper business, applies himself diligently to it, and goes on regularly and perseveringly in it; peace, order, plenty, and cheerfulness will reign throughout the house.

But *their own interest* is concerned in this matter, as well as that of their masters and the rest of the family. Industry contributes not a little to health; and that is one of the principal blessings of life. Exerting themselves with attention, vigour, and activity in their stations, they will have a relish for food and sleep, and those other comforts to which they will be entitled, and which all good masters will wish them to enjoy. Inured to a regular expeditious manner of doing their work, their work will become less painful and fatiguing to them. And their agility and sprightliness will not fail to recommend them to those they serve, and secure them many advantages which slothful servants, who at best do their duty grudgingly, can have no reason to expect. In short, their character, honour, and prosperity are deeply interested in their attention to this branch of their duty.

Diligence, in regard of every kind of business we undertake, is frequently and earnestly *inculcated in Scripture*; and its opposite, indolence, is marked with epithets of disgrace and reproach. Solomon speaks of the former in terms of the highest respect, telling us that *the hand of the diligent maketh rich a*; that *his thoughts tend only to plenty b*; and that *a man of this character shall stand before kings, and not before mean men c*: and he speaks of the sluggard as the most worthless and contemptible of all beings *d*. Diligence is urged upon us in the New Testament with the like warmth as in the Old. In the very same breath that we are commanded to serve the Lord, we are cautioned against being slothful in business; *not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord e*. The Thessalonians are exhorted to *study to be quiet, and to do their proper business, working with their own hands f*. And *they who learn to be idle, and so become tatlers and busy bodies*, are very severely reprehended *g*. The admonitions of this sort which occur in the Bible are too numerous to be recited. To this object more than one parable of our Saviour's is directed, wherein he holds up to our view the character of the diligent servant on the one hand, as attaining to great honour and wealth; and that of the slothful, on the other, as coming to disgrace, poverty, and wretchedness *h*.

And Scripture examples there are many which well deserve the regard of servants. Such was the attention of Abraham's servant to his master's affairs, that when he arrived at the house of Bethuel, the father of Rebekah, however fatigued he might be with his journey, he would not eat till he had delivered his message *i*. Jacob served his uncle Laban diligently, *with all his power*, as he himself expresses it; and God rewarded him *k*. So did Joseph his master Potiphar, and afterwards Pharaoh: and to what dignity and power he arose we have already observed *l*. The diligence of the prophets and apostles in the service of their divine Master, is often mentioned in Scripture to their honour; and having ceased from their labours, they are now

a Prov. x. 4. *b* Chap. xxi. 5. *c* Chap. xxii. 29.
d Chap. xxxiv. 30—ult. *e* Rom. xii. 11. *f* 1 Thess. iv. 11.
g 1 Tim. v. 13. *h* Matt. xxiv, xxv. *i* Gen. xxiv. 33.
k Gen. xxxi. 6. *l* Gen. xxxix, xl, xli.

entered into the rest of heaven; and at the great day of account their painful and constant exertions for the glory of God and good of mankind, will be applauded in the presence of angels and men. How worthy these examples of our imitation in the service of God! And how worthy too of their's whom we are here exhorting to diligence in the service of their earthly masters! But the example of Christ, the servant of God, and of all servants the most diligent as well as faithful, demands their particular attention. He lost no time, spared no pains, failed in no one duty required of him. *Wist ye not*, said he to his parents on a certain occasion, *that I must be about my Father's business a?* And on another, *My meat is to do the will of him who sent me b.* And when he came to die, he could say what no one besides himself could, that *he had finished*, fully perfected, *the work given him to do c.* Be *diligent* therefore, servants, in your duty.—To which excellent quality we shall only add one more, and that is,

4. *Cheerfulness.*

A virtue this which crowns all the rest, gives the finishing stroke to the character of good servants, and renders what they do acceptable to their masters, and easy to themselves. An unwilling, ill-natured, gloomy servant is a kind of spectre in the house where he dwells, that strikes horror into the minds of all that behold him. His mulish, surly obstinacy makes every one afraid of him: *He is not to be corrected by words*, as Solomon expresses it, *for though he understand he will not answer d.* Let the ability or the fidelity of such a servant be what it may, they will not compensate for these ill qualities. Nor is it indeed imaginable that one of this complexion will do his business as it ought to be done. Few people bring any work to perfection which they attempt with reluctance. Out of humour with it, they have not inclination or patience to go through with it: or if they have, it is done in so superficial a manner that it cannot give satisfaction. And thus having no heart for the work, but ever toiling against the stream, what is thus ill done costs them as much pains and labour as if it were well done.

But the reverse is the case where sprightliness and good-na-

a Luke ii. 49. *b* John iv. 34.
c John xvii. 4. *d* Prov. xxix. 19.

ture mark the character of servants. Such servants will feel themselves happy, and make all happy about them. Considering their duty as their interest, and having a natural turn for it, remembering that Providence has placed them in the rank they fill, and that they have covenanted to do the duties of it; pleasing themselves with the hope that though it be an inferior station, they shall in time rise to a superior one, and assuring themselves that aiming to excel they shall not fail to please; occupied I say with these cheerful and animating ideas, they will scarce feel pain or fatigue in any of their exertions, or if they do, it will be more than balanced by the repose, pleasure, and commendation that will follow. The liveliness of their countenance, the softness of their address, the readiness of their answers, and their decent, respectful, good-natured carriage will secure them the good-will of all they serve. Their masters will consider and treat them as their friends, not their slaves. The children of the family will quickly feel an affectionate attachment to them. And the relations and acquaintance of the house will have a pleasure in visiting it, and go away admiring as well the kind and benevolent manners of the servants, as the prudence and hospitality of their superiors.

And now is not such a mode of obedience as this proper? What do servants get by doing their duty grudgingly? They hurt themselves as much as they do others. They waste their spirits more by the frowardness of their tempers than the labours of their hands, and if they get their wages, they miss of that which an ingenuous mind would consider as his principal reward, the good-will of his superiors.

There is indeed a difference in people's natural tempers, and all proper allowance should be made for that timidity, gloominess, and reserve which is constitutional to some persons. But then servants who are thus circumstanced, should endeavour to master their tempers, by reasoning with themselves, and watching against every expression of these ill qualities, so disgusting to all observers. They should thrust gloomy ideas as much as possible from their minds, and endeavour to make their situations as agreeable to themselves as they can. They should learn to sing as well as to pray, and should consider, especially if they are Christian servants, how much they are obliged to

contribute to the comfort and happiness of all around them, and what disgrace the contrary behaviour will bring on their profession.

Cheerfulness in matters of religion is of the last importance. Whoever is an acceptable servant of God must be so out of choice: he must love his Master, and make his honour and interest his object. It must be his meat and drink to do his will, and he must consider his work as his reward. *Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing a.* Thus the angels serve God. Happy spirits! How cheerful their countenances! How willing their obedience! *They do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word b.* How *swiftly* did Gabriel fly, charged with a message of high importance, to Daniel, the man greatly beloved of God c! Thus the prophets and apostles served God, and thus they laboured with all their might to persuade others to serve him. And thus—blessed example indeed!—the Lord Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh served his Father. *Lo, I come,* said he, *to do thy will.* Though a thousand obstructions were thrown in his way, none of them discouraged him. *He went about,* ill treated as he was, *doing good.* He felt ardent pleasure in his work. Not a complaint was ever heard from his lips. His countenance was serene and easy, his address affable and courteous, and his words soft and engaging. Wherever he came, his kind and obliging manner put it beyond a doubt, that he served both God and man with perfect sincerity and cordiality. What a glorious pattern this for our imitation! Who can consider it, and not catch fire at it? Set him, servants, before your eyes, and charge it upon yourselves to do as he did.

This ready obedience to the will of your masters is likewise strictly *enjoined* in the word of God, and you are allured to it by the most gracious *promises* of divine *assistance* in the course of your work, and an ample *reward* at the close of it. *Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men d,* says the apostle to the Colossians. And the language of the text is, *Obey your masters in singleness of your heart, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing*

a Psal. c. 2.
b Psal. ciii. 20.
c Dan. ix. 21.
d Col. iii. 23.

the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. And you may depend upon it he will comfort, strengthen, and succeed you. Of you, who consider yourselves as serving God while serving your masters, he says, *My servants shall eat, but they who choose that wherein I delight not shall be hungry: those shall drink, but these be thirsty: those shall rejoice, but these be ashamed: those shall sing for joy of heart, but these cry with sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit a.* And how unspeakably glorious will your reward in heaven be! There you shall cease from your labours, and your works shall follow you. *The reward of the inheritance ye shall receive, for ye have served the Lord Christ b. Well done, good and faithful servant!* he will say, *enter thou into the joy of thy Lord c.*

Thus have we considered the obedience required of servants, and the manner in which it should be rendered. "Servants, obey your masters in all things: and let your obedience be *humble, faithful, diligent,* and *cheerful.*" And now, my friends, may I hope the light in which your duty has been placed, and the arguments with which it has been enforced, approve themselves to your understanding and judgment, and to the ingenuous feelings of your hearts? If so, and you are disposed cordially to fall in with the apostolical admonition in our text, you will be yourselves happy, you will make your masters happy, and you will crown our endeavours to promote your mutual good with an ample reward.

a Isa. lxv. 13, 14. *b* Col. iii. 24. *c* Matt. xxv. 21.

DISCOURSE VIII.

DUTIES OF MASTERS TO SERVANTS.

EPH. VI. 9.—*And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.*

THE duties of *servants* to their masters having been at large explained and enforced, we are now to consider those of *masters* to their servants. This is a subject of as great importance as the former, for the obligations and interests of both parties are mutual: and indeed, after all the pains that have been taken with servants, the success of our endeavours depends not a little upon the prudent, resolute, and good-natured behaviour of masters towards them.

In explaining the text we are to consider, First, The *persons* addressed: Secondly, The *duties* enjoined: and Thirdly, The *arguments* with which they are enforced.

First, The *persons* addressed are *masters*.

Masters here are to be considered, agreeably to what was observed in the former discourse respecting servants, either as claiming property in their servants, or as having an authority over them that was the result of mutual compact. These are called masters *according to the flesh*, to remind both them and their servants of the great God, who is afterwards said to be their *Master in heaven*. So servants are taught to have regard to the divine authority in the obedience they render to their masters; and masters, on the other hand, are taught to exercise humanity and condescension to their servants. Although they are their superiors in regard of condition, they are upon an equality with them in regard of nature. And whatever authority they claim over their bodies, that authority cannot extend to their nobler part, the soul. They are and can be only masters *according to the flesh*.

Secondly, We are next to consider the *duties* enjoined on masters.

These are all included in the general idea of *doing the same things unto them*, that is, acting upon the same principles of equity and benevolence, as those on which servants are required to act in their obedience to them. If it is their duty to be faithful, honest, and just, it is the duty of masters to be so too. If the latter are not to be injured in their persons, characters, or property, so neither are the former. *Masters*, says the apostle elsewhere, *give unto your servants that which is just and equal* a. Let them have such food, wages, protection, and commendation as their services merit, and as by positive agreement you stand engaged to render them.

But it is not the rule of justice only but that of benevolence also, which is to govern the conduct of masters towards their servants. They are to treat them with all humanity, moderation, and gentleness, *forbearing threatening*. Some explain the word here used b, of remitting oft the evils threatened, which, if it were the sense, would seem to allow of threatening. But surely the apostle could not mean to countenance a practice so improper in itself, and so opposite to the mildness and generosity of the gospel, which is not only averse to a vindictive temper, but to all that violence and passion which is usually expressed in loud and menacing language. And it is probable he had in his eye the treatment which bond servants or slaves commonly met with, who were considered as their master's absolute property, and to be disposed of according to their pleasure, which treatment therefore he reprobates.

Thirdly, We have next the argument with which these duties are enforced.

They are in general insinuated in the manner the duties themselves are described, that is to say, it is right and fit that men should do so unto others as they would have others do to them; and therefore masters should on this ground consider themselves obliged to the duties recommended. And then, masters, by being addressed as Christians, are reminded of the equity, humanity, and benevolence of the Christian scheme, and so by these truly noble and exalted motives urged to their duty.

But the consideration more directly held up to their view, is that of their *knowing that their master also is in heaven, nei-*

a Col. iv. 1. b Ἀνιέντες.

ther is there respect of persons with him. All ranks of men are alike servants of the great God, and amenable to him: and it is most certain that he is strictly just, and will not shew a partial regard to any on account of the superior stations they hold in life. This they should remember. But perhaps the apostle has Christ here more immediately in his eye, and by speaking of him as being *in heaven*, would remind them that he has a greater and more absolute authority over them, than they can by any laws whatever be supposed to have over their servants. And as he is their master, and will by and by call them to an account, so they should charge it upon themselves frequently to realize the solemnities of the last judgment, which will be conducted according to the strict rules of truth and justice.

The text thus explained, we proceed to a more full discussion of the subject before us. But, previous to a particular enumeration of the duties required of masters, let us spend a few moments in shewing the great importance of their taking every proper measure to secure to themselves the *Reverence* and *Affection* of their servants. These two points, once gained, will have a considerable effect to facilitate the several duties to be hereafter recommended.

I. It should be the care of masters to establish in the breasts of their servants a due *Reverence* for their authority.

Without this it will be impossible that the one should govern, or the other serve aright. No authority can avail that is held in contempt: its exertion will be feeble, and its effect nugatory. A master has a right to command, and a servant should know it, and know too that he is resolved to assert it. Property, rank, and consent give power. But of what use is power, if not applied to the purpose for which it was given? If, through pusillanimity, ill-breeding, or want of sense, masters suffer all idea of their superiority to be obliterated from the minds of their servants, is it to be wondered that such servants grow familiar with them, that this familiarity breeds pertness and confidence, that these are followed with obstinacy and disobedience, and so all the ends of their office as servants are defeated? It can scarce be otherwise. Possessing this power, therefore, masters should have spirit to claim it, particularly when servants enter their families. This will fix such impressions of humility, fear, and

reverence, upon their minds, as will have the most important effect to guard them against indecency, idleness, and neglect. They will not dare to treat their masters' orders with indifference, or by a confident behaviour to put them to the blush before strangers.

But by what kind of deportment are masters to secure to themselves such respect from their servants? Not by assuming a power they have no right to. Not by arrogating the authority of a haughty despot. Not by accustoming themselves to a proud, supercilious, distant carriage. We mean nothing of this kind. Such a behaviour is carrying the matter to an extreme as pernicious as the contrary. No, what I mean is a propriety and dignity of conduct resulting from a just sense of their superiority. How do some heads of families let themselves down in the opinion of their servants, by allowing them the like familiarity they do their children or their particular friends! Can this be right? Have masters reason to expect their domestics will revere them, if no attention is paid to the natural and proper forms, which the common sense and custom of all nations have adopted? If, for instance, they allow them to be talkative, to answer again, to take place by their side, or to be covered in their presence; can they wonder that their servants quickly forget their character and station, and so become indisposed to their duty? *Is the servant above his Lord* a? To justify such imprudences on the ground of humility and condescension, is weak to the last degree, if not absolutely criminal. Our Lord himself condemns it, when he says in one of his discourses, *Which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken: and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not* b.—On the other hand,

2. Masters should be alike anxious to secure to themselves the cordial *Affection* of their servants.

As to God, love is of as much consequence to influence and regulate our obedience to him as reverence. No one that does

a Matt. x. 24. b Luke xvii. 7—9.

not affectionately esteem that great Being, will render him acceptable and effectual service. Such is the case with respect to servants. If they have no cordial attachment to their masters, but possess only the abject awe and reverence of slaves, however they may do what they are bid, they will not do it well; and their masters will find their business in governing them to be a very arduous one indeed. They must, in such case, have their eye perpetually upon them, must issue their orders on every matter with a severe and peremptory tone, and must frequently endure the painful jealousy of undutifulness and infidelity. On the contrary, if our servants love as well as reverence us, they will not only obey our commands, but obey them cheerfully. They will make our interests their own, and by aiming with all their might to please, will relieve us of many anxieties and exertions which would otherwise be unavoidable. This, therefore, should be an object with the heads of families. The securing this point, as well as the former, should engage their steady attention, especially when servants first enter their houses.

But how is this to be done? Not by indecent familiarity or mean submission, much less insincere pretences: but by a humane, candid, generous, friendly behaviour towards them. Satisfied of the characters of their servants when they hire them, and feeling themselves well affected towards them as honest, industrious, and good-natured, and especially as religious persons, if such they are; masters should endeavour to convince them that they are their friends, and mean to do them all the good that lies in their power. And in the full persuasion of this kind disposition towards them, they should take pains by all proper means to confirm them, such as condescension, affability, good-natured language, pleasant countenances, and other more substantial tokens of approbation. This no doubt is their duty and interest, and one would wonder that people are not more generally sensible of it.—And now having laid the foundation of domestic government in the secure possession of the reverence and affection of our servants, we shall be enabled pretty easily to rear the superstructure. We proceed therefore to consider the duty of masters in reference to—the *Civil affairs* of their servants—their *Moral conduct*—and their *Religious interests.*

FIRST, As to the *Civil concerns* of the family.

This is a subject that cannot with propriety be so fully discussed in a sermon, as in some other kind of discourse. We will, however, venture some general observations on it, and the rather as the duty of masters, which hath indeed a principal reference to these matters, cannot be understood without it. I say their duty hath a principal reference to these matters, because, though the moral and religious interests of our servants ought ever to be considered by us as objects of the highest moment, yet it is for the immediate purpose of assisting us in our temporal concerns, that we take them into our houses.

1. Permit us then, in the first place, to advise the regular arrangement of the several businesses required of servants.

Method and punctuality are of importance to the right conducting and expediting all civil affairs. So here. Every one in the house should have his proper office assigned him. A fit time should be allotted for each duty. The day is for work, the night for rest. The early hours of the morning should not be wasted in sloth. Business should be forwarded, and that not put off to a late season which ought to be done immediately. Each service should succeed the other in regular order, and the department of this servant not clash with the duty of that. Matters thus adjusted in a family, all will go on with ease, harmony, and success. Confusion will be avoided. Waste will be prevented. Much will be done in a little time. A good understanding will be preserved through the house. And cheerfulness will be seen in every countenance. Now the disposing matters in such manner, is a duty lying upon the heads of families. They should therefore summon together all the prudence, good-nature, and resolution they are masters of, in order to the compassing these objects. More depends upon this than some may at first view imagine.

Inattention to domestic affairs, either through sloth or affectation of superiority to those low concerns, as some may style them, has proved the ruin of many families. Indeed this is an evil, which in the present age of dissipation, calls loudly for a reform. Can any thing be more absurd than for the mistress of a house to consider what is her proper business as beneath her? By such a conduct she disgraces her understand-

ing, as well as injures her family. Would to God we could persuade such idle giddy people to oppose to their own character that of the virtuous woman in the Proverbs! Methinks the contrast would put them out of humour with themselves, and quickly recover them to their senses. Let them also recollect the character of *Dorcas*, whose fame will not be forgotten so long as the Scriptures remain in our hands. So attentive was she to her domestic concerns, and the providing for her family and poor neighbours, that at her death *all the widows stood by Peter weeping, and shewing the coats and garments she made, while she was with them a.*—But to return. As the general outlines of their duty are to be pointed out to them, so,

2. Servants are to have particular instructions *what* is to be done, and *how* it is to be done.

This is necessary to our own satisfaction, and to their improvement. How can we expect to be pleased, if we do not give them proper directions to that end? *I say to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it b:* "I make him understand what I would have done, and it is immediately done." And indeed, if the heads of families in both departments, do not look narrowly after their servants' work, they may depend upon it their servants will get a contemptible idea of their understandings, and so will be under a temptation to slight their business, if not wholly neglect it. And it will not be a sufficient excuse to a stranger, if things are ill done, and the house is all in disorder, that you have bad servants. It will be naturally enough suspected, either that through your imprudence you have not a

a Acts ix. 39.

Persons in the highest stations, and who have been famed for their good sense as well as their superior rank, have not deemed it beneath them to attend to the affairs of their families, and to exercise their ingenuity and charity in the manner Dorcas did. Augustus prided himself in wearing garments spun by Livia. Homer describes Helen employed at the loom in the palace of her father Priam,

> Την δ' εν μεγαροιν η δε μεγαν ιστον υφαινε
> Διπλακιδα, πορφυρεην· πολεας δ' ενιπασσεν αεθλους
> Τρωων θ' ιπποδαμων θ' Αχαιων χαλκοχιτωνων. HOM. *Il.* 3.

> Her in the palace, at her loom she found;
> The golden web her own sad story crown'd.
> The Trojan wars she weav'd———— POPE.

b Luke vii. 8.

proper command over them, or that you do not understand your own affairs. Besides, common justice to servants requires that they should be properly taught, in order to their becoming expert and notable. If you will not direct and guide them, how are they to improve?

This is more especially the duty of masters to such servants as are entrusted to their care, to be bred up to particular occupations and professions in life. Neglect in these instances is not only imprudent, but highly criminal. The idea of instruction, as well as authority, is implied in the character of a master. In matters of religion, as servants, we are to pray to God to teach us his will, to say to him, *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do a? Speak, for thy servant heareth b. Let thy work appear unto thy servants c.* And God, as our divine Master, hath promised us all needful help and instruction. Christ failed not to instruct his servants, the apostles, and so he does all good men by his Holy Spirit. This therefore is a duty incumbent on masters.

3. Care is to be taken that no more is required of servants than they are equal to, and that we are gentle in our deportment towards them.

To lay burdens upon them which they have not strength to bear, is cruel. To demand services of them they are not competent to, and for which they were not hired, is unjust. Yea, to expect absolute perfection of them in the particular department they undertake, is unreasonable. Their understandings, abilities, and natural tempers should be consulted, and all proper allowances made for little failures and oversights. We should put ourselves in their place, and do unto them as we would have them, if they were our masters, do unto us. Humanity and good-nature are indispensable qualities in those who would govern their families well. The want of these will beget disgust in servants, and their tempers being soured they will neglect their business, or however not do it as it should be done. Every thing will go on ill, and noise and clamour will disturb the repose of the whole house. All this therefore is to be avoided, and a certain sweetness and affability to accompany our instructions, admonitions, and commands. This is an art which some

a Acts ix. 6. *b* 1 Sam. iii. 9. *c* Psal. xc. 16.

have acquired in a very high degree, and the effect is so considerable that all about them are happy, and their friends who visit them sharers in their felicity. As the several parts in music conspire to produce a pleasing effect on the ear, so the ease and sprightliness of good-nature, properly blended with the grave tone of authority, seldom fails to produce the agreeable effect of cheerful obedience, and to create perfect harmony throughout the family.

Such deportment in the heads of families hath the sanction not only of good sense and prudence, but of the *Bible*. By the law of Moses, masters are expressly forbid *to rule their servants with rigour a.* The language of the text is, *Ye masters, do the same things unto them:* that is, as they serve you, so do you govern them with good-will; remembering that so doing ye do the will of God. And now we mention that great Being, how can we avoid expatiating a moment on the mildness and gentleness of his conduct, as a master, towards us! Oh! how does he bear not only with our inadvertencies and failings, but with our undutifulness, perverseness, and rebellion! Had he treated us with the rigour some masters treat their servants, we had long since been dismissed his service, denied a character, obliged to beg our bread, yea, reduced to the utmost poverty and wretchedness. On the contrary, he is patient and long-suffering, he pities us and pardons us, he takes every lenient measure to soften our rugged tempers, and to conciliate our affections to his service. Let us then be ambitious of imitating him, and convince *our* servants that we are indeed *his* servants.

But if *examples* of an inferior kind, by coming nearer our own standard, will have a more direct effect, we have enough of them in Scripture. What an excellent master was Abraham! When he has occasion to send the eldest servant of his house upon a business of importance, we hear him saying, not with the haughtiness of an eastern despot, *See thou do this*, but with all the softness that religion, as well as good sense, inspires, *I pray thee* do so and so *b*. What a sensible, courteous, good-natured mistress was Abigail! how easy of access to her servants! And how readily did they obey her commands! Such was her character. And if shades will enliven a picture, the churlishness

a Lev. xxv. 53. *b* Gen. xxiv. 2.

of her husband Nabal will throw a lustre upon the prudence and gentleness for which she was so remarkable. Like a wretch as he was, he treats the servants of David, who came to him in a peaceable and respectful manner, with the most abusive language; *Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master?* And his own domestics, who had no doubt suffered enough from his rude behaviour, are obliged to complain to their mistress of this ill-timed inhospitality and brutish ill-mannerliness of their master *a*. Other instances might be mentioned, but these shall suffice. Let masters then be gentle in their deportment towards their servants.—It is however fit and necessary,

4. That they should reprove them when they do wrong.

Some faults should be wholly overlooked: some, though small, should be noticed that they may be amended: and others of greater magnitude, and that proceed from habitual carelessness, or which is worse from ill-will, should be censured with some degree of asperity. But then we should see to it that there be just ground for the censure, and that it be denounced in a manner that does not savour of malevolence. *Be angry*, the apostle somewhere says, *and sin not.* We may be displeased, and shew our displeasure with some warmth, and yet not be vindictive or resentful. Every approach towards this the worst of tempers, should be carefully avoided. To which end we should endeavour to entertain a good opinion of our servants, to guard against peevishness, or a disposition to find fault, and, if our passions are suddenly roused, to do our utmost to prevent the effect. Dislike of what is amiss is sometimes much better announced by looks than words. Or if we are in danger of expressing ourselves before we are aware, too strongly, it will be our prudence to turn away, and defer our rebukes and remonstrances to a more calm moment. Hasty, passionate, violent language, especially when used to servants, who are our inferiors, is an offence against decency and good manners. It is an argument of ill-breeding and want of sense, and seldom produces any good effect. Ingenuous minds are hurt by such treatment, the stupid are hardened, and servants, who are of the same vio-

a 1 Sam. xxv.

lent temper, are tempted to make reprisals in a way that is sure to issue in the disgrace if not the defeat of their superiors.

Having said this, we scarce need caution masters against proceeding to further extremities. Chastisements of a corporal nature are rarely to be inflicted, even on young persons who are not arrived to the full use of their reason. But such treatment of grown persons, or a behaviour that at all borders on it, is illiberal to the last degree. The text forbids it, at least by consequence; *forbear threatening*, that is, use not loud, severe, menacing language to your servants, much less any violence to their persons. And how contrary every thing of this sort is to the genius of the Christian religion, as well as to decency and good sense, I need not take pains to shew. The gospel at once inspires men with a mild and gentle, and with a noble and magnanimous spirit: and the latter is as inimical to a haughty, fierce, tyrannical behaviour towards servants as the former. The man therefore of this complexion, if he calls himself a Christian, gives a lie to his profession; but at the same time rescues it from disgrace, by telling all around him that he is only a pretender to the character he assumes.

But how are servants to be reproved when they do amiss? With gentleness and moderation, if they are of a soft and ingenuous temper, and the fault is of no great consequence: with firmness and asperity, if they are obstinate and unyielding, and the fault is considerable. Reproof should be well timed: never given when we are in a passion, and so incapable of addressing them with calmness and dignity; and always, if possible, when they are in a disposition to listen to our reproofs, and to profit by them. It should not be too frequently repeated, for, if it is, it will lose its effect. The object should be conviction and amendment, not the gratification of resentment. And a reproof well taken should instantly and totally annihilate the fault. *As an ear-ring of gold*, says Solomon, *and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear* a. In short, if people have but a general knowledge of human nature, and a common share of prudence, and if all their view be to make themselves and their servants happy, they need not be at any great loss how to conduct this business; especially if they fear God,

a Prov. xxv. 12.

and are rightly instructed in the religion of Jesus.—But it is the duty of masters,

5. To commend their servants when they do right, as well as reprove them when they do amiss.

A wish to please is an amiable disposition in all ranks of men, particularly servants. And if from ingenuousness of temper, and a cordial affection for their masters, they make it their business to conform to their will, and are never so happy as when they give them pleasure, it is but right they should receive a recompence in this way. A cheerful smile and an applauding word will give them spirits, and enliven them in their work. On the contrary, if the heads of families carry themselves always with an air of gloominess and reserve towards their servants, and think it is enough, when things are done to their mind, that they do not find fault; is it to be wondered that their servants' tempers are soured, that they relax in their obedience, and that their work goes on heavily? Would we wish them then to serve us cheerfully, we should, on proper occasions, let them know that we accept such services with pleasure at their hands. On proper occasions, I say; for commendations ill-timed, and too frequently repeated (as we observed before of reproofs) will lose their effect. Indeed, some servants are so perverse, that they are in as much danger of suffering by praise as by censure: the former becomes an occasion of exciting conceit and pertness, the latter of prejudice and ill-will. To such servants, therefore, that applause should be dealt out parsimoniously, which may be bestowed on others with some degree of profusion: so that prudence and good-nature are to be equally consulted in the distribution of this benefit.

But indeed it is happy when the tempers of servants and masters will allow of a mutual exchange of cheerful services and cheerful acknowledgements, without any injury to subordination on the one hand, or authority on the other. Where this is the case, we see no blackness or reserve lowering upon the countenances of either superiors or inferiors; our ears are dinned with no loud commands or clamorous replies, no sharp reproofs or confident answers. But, on the contrary, pleasure sits smiling on every brow, and peace, harmony, and joy prevail through the whole house. The master says, Do this, and the servant does

it: his commands are executed with almost the same ease that they are given, and the commendation in return is, Well done good and faithful servant!—This leads us to speak,

6. And lastly, of the recompence to be made them for their services.—But this, with what follows, we must refer to the next sermon.

PART II.

In the preceding sermon, previous to a particular enumeration of the duties required of masters, we have shewn the great importance of their taking every proper measure to secure the *Reverence* and *Affection* of their servants. So we have proceeded to consider the duty of masters in reference to—the *Civil Affairs* of their servants—their *Moral Conduct*—and their *Religious Interests.* We have begun with the *Civil Affairs* of the family. And here we have advised—the regular arrangement of the several businesses of the house—the particularly instructing servants *what* is to be done, and *how* it is to be done—the not requiring more of them than they are equal to—the reproving them when they do wrong—and the commending them when they do right.—To all which we have now to add,

6. And lastly, the making them an adequate recompence for their services.—In this idea I include—*Protection*—*Maintenance*—*Wages*—and *Character.*

They who serve us have no doubt a right to our *Protection.* When they enter our house they entrust their persons, their reputation, and in a sense all their interests to our care. Their interests, therefore, we should consider as our own. Every injury done them, especially when incurred by the faithful discharge of their duty, we should look upon as offered to ourselves. Their grievances we should redress, and to the utmost of our power defend them against all the evils to which they are liable. *If I did despise,* says Job, *the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me: what shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him* [a]? They who can be inattentive to the safety, repose, and happiness of their servants, are void of justice and humanity, and not a little defective in policy. Equity demands

[a] Job xxxi. 13, 14.

that those who defend, assist, and serve us, should enjoy the benefit of our patronage: and common sense teaches, that indifference on our parts towards them will be likely to beget indifference on theirs towards us. Masters are admonished in our text, *to do the same things* unto their servants, that their servants are required to do unto them. Would we have them then defend our persons, our characters, our habitations, and our property, we should with the like zeal defend theirs; and the rather, as their inferior station renders them in a manner helpless, and therefore the fitter objects of the attention and regard of those who have it in their power to help them.

Maintenance too they have an unquestionable right to. How can they do their duty, if they have not health, strength, and spirits to enable them to do it? And how are these to be acquired, if a seasonable supply of food, raiment, and rest is denied them? These we agree to give them, or to put it in their power to procure, when they enter our service: and to withhold them is equally unjust and foolish. What horrid inhumanity to grudge the necessaries of life to those who prepare for us the conveniencies of it! What wretched avarice to collect wealth from the scanty tables of our domestics! A kind of parsimony this that wants a name for it. A man of spirit would rather suffer any reproach than be upbraided with the meagre countenances of his servants: rather perish in obscurity, than see famine stalking about his house, while he possesses the means of driving the spectre thence. It is not, however, luxury we mean to recommend: that is an extreme as dangerous the other way. No considerate servants will expect to have their tables spread with delicacies: but plain and wholesome food they ought to have, and a plenty of it too, with a hearty welcome.

Wages also they should receive adequate to their services, in a proportion which general consent has established, and rather exceeding the strict demands of justice than otherwise. *Masters*, says the apostle, *give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven* a. Jacob served Laban faithfully, and with all his might, as he expresses it: yet Laban dealt deceitfully with him, and changed his wages ten times. God, however, suffered not Laban to

a Col. iv. 1.

hurt him: but on the contrary, by an extraordinary interposition, took away his wealth from him, and gave it to Jacob; so at once rewarding the servant's integrity, and punishing the master's infidelity *a*. The law of Moses was particularly attentive to this matter. 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates. At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee *b*.' A woe is denounced by the prophet Jeremiah on him 'that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work *c*.' And the apostle James exposes in the strongest terms the avarice and brutality of those wretched masters, who 'kept back by fraud the hire of the labourers who reaped down their fields;' telling them that 'the cries of the oppressed had entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth *d*.'

There is also one more claim which servants have upon their masters, and that is a proper *attestation to their characters*, when they quit their service. This is a duty which cannot be denied them, without manifest injustice. If it is a debt we owe to all our acquaintance to bear witness, when called upon, to their good behaviour; servants surely, whose livelihood, whose all depends upon their character, have a most unquestionable right to demand this recompence of us. Nor can there be the least difficulty in rendering them this office, with reference to their moral conduct, if they have acquitted themselves honestly and faithfully in our service. If the reverse is the case, no tenderness for them will justify the affirming an untruth concerning them, and the rather as others may be essentially injured by such mistaken lenity towards them. Truth indeed is to be observed in regard of every other matter respecting them, upon which information is demanded. And if a strict attention were more generally paid to it, many evils in families which originate from the ill-behaviour of servants would be prevented, and greater pains would be taken by this class of people to merit that character, which the humane and good-natured ever wish to have

a Gen. xxxi. 6, 7, 15, 16.
b Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.
c Jer. xxii. 13.
d James v. 1—4.

it in their power to give. But then on the other hand, it is but just to observe in favour of servants, that the little disgust we may have felt at their quitting our service, should by no means dispose us to give a too high colouring to their faults, or unnecessarily to obtrude on others any unfavourable idea of them. The dictates of charity are to be regarded as well as justice, and no hasty prejudice should induce us either to exaggerate their faults, or conceal their virtues.

Thus have we pointed out to the heads of families, in various particulars, the line of conduct to be observed by them towards their servants in the management of their domestic concerns. We proceed now,

SECONDLY, To consider the care they are to take of their servants' *Morals*.

To this subject some attention has been paid already: for such an influence have good morals on the civil concerns of life, that it is scarce possible to give persons prudential directions about the latter, without either directly or implicitly urging upon them the former. When masters are discharging the duties recommended under the former head, they are in effect teaching their servants many excellent lessons of morality, such as integrity, modesty, diligence, frugality, and the like. But it is possible that they may be acute, sensible, and active in the management of worldly business, and on these accounts merit the character of good servants, and yet be deficient in their morals. This therefore is a matter that deserves to be treated, as we have proposed, under a separate head. By good morals I mean a due regard to justice, truth, sobriety, benevolence, and other social virtues. Now,

1. It is the wisdom of masters to look well to the characters of their servants before they hire them.

This is a matter of such importance that people are pretty generally agreed in it. What man in his senses would entrust the guidance of his affairs to one void of all principle? would like to be served by a person whose word is not to be relied on? or suffer his house to become an asylum for drunkards and debauchees? The greatest evils are to be apprehended from inattention to these matters. Your substance may be plundered, your house consumed, your children ruined, and yourselves

murdered. The character therefore of servants should be well looked into, and if they are even suspicious, it is a sufficient reason why we should not admit them under our roof. This shews of what consequence it is to people of this class, to be careful that they do not by any wilful misconduct forfeit their good name, or by any imprudence put it out of the power of those they serve to speak steadily to this point. Their character, as we observed just now, is their livelihood, they should therefore on no account trifle with it. And for the same reason, masters are in charity bound to be extremely cautious how they admit a doubt of their integrity, and to be as candid as they possibly can in the account they give of them to others. But it is possible that servants may be in the general honest and sober, and yet in some points of duty defective: indeed there are none without their faults. It is therefore,

2. The duty of masters to instruct them in the principles, and confirm them in the habits of virtue.

Servants should be taught the difference between good and evil; their obligations to do to others as they would have others do to them; the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; the advantages which the former draws after it, and the miseries consequent upon the latter. But how are these truths to be conveyed to their minds? In various ways. It will sometimes be right to address our discourse immediately to them on these matters. And when we do so, we should consult their capacities and tempers, endeavouring to make our instructions easy to their understandings, and the motives with which we enforce them interesting to their passions. The fit opportunity should be seized, and every aid that circumstances afford improved. Sometimes, and indeed frequently, knowledge of this kind may be insinuated to their minds by familiar discourse at our table, and on other occasions, when they are waiting on us. A trifling incident, a little story, a sudden remark, a passing observation, often conveys admonition to the heart for which it did not seem intended. This oblique way of teaching our servants is a very happy, and may prove a very effectual one. Books too upon moral subjects should be put into their hands: I do not mean plays, novels, and romances; but such plain, short, well writ treatises as are adapted to strike the mind with

horror at the idea of vice, and to allure the heart to the practice of virtue. But above all, the reading of the Bible should be urged upon them:—that sacred book which disseminates the nature and obligations of morality, in a manner infinitely more artless and commanding than any other book whatever. And it is an argument of prudence as well as benevolence in masters, to open the avenues to such instruction, by enabling those to read, who come totally rude and uninstructed into their service. To all which should be added a serious and regular attention to the duties of family and public worship.—The next thing we have to recommend, is,

3. The watching over the morals of our servants.

Instruction will avail nothing, if not reduced to practice: and the best means to attain this end is to convince them, by our strict attention to their behaviour, that as we have consecrated our habitation to virtue, so we are determined at all events it shall have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. As to gross immoralities, few cases of this sort arise, that will admit of such extenuation as to justify the continuing the delinquent in our service. Yet if satisfaction could be obtained of the genuineness of his repentance, and that the crime would not be repeated, a good master would be happy in giving him an opportunity of recovering his character. Philemon, at the instance of the apostle Paul, overlooked the offences of Onesimus, and cheerfully received him again into his service. In most cases, however, the experiment is dangerous. But it is not with gross immoralities we are here concerned: the object is to guard against a distant approach towards those evils. The indignation of a master should kindle at the very first expression of falsehood, injustice, lewdness, detraction, obstinacy, inhumanity, and the like vices. Severe and pointed reproofs should be given, and these failing, expulsion should follow; and so the spread of the infection be prevented. *A froward heart*, says David, *shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look, and a proud heart, will not I suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell*

within my house: he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight a.

On the contrary, virtuous dispositions in servants should be cherished, assisted, and rewarded. It will sometimes so happen, that circumstances of a peculiar kind will arise to try their sincerity, honour, and gratitude. And having nobly acquitted themselves on these occasions, they should not fail to receive such substantial tokens of respect, as may convince them that these fine feelings and exalted sentiments are common to their masters with them. Faults frankly acknowledged, without the little subterfuges of mean prevarication, should be as frankly forgiven. The utmost care should be taken to draw a line between the errors of a mistaken judgment, and those of a depraved will. And we should be infinitely more lavish in our commendations of one simple undisguised expression of an honest heart, than of the most striking effect of wit and genius.—But there is another matter we have to recommend to the heads of families, which is of as great consequence as any we have yet mentioned, and that is,

4. The setting their servants good examples.

Could we suppose a master ever so attentive to the morals of his servants, ever so severe in reprehending vice, and ever so profuse in his praise of virtue; if he were himself a bad man, it would have little effect. Inferiors are generally more disposed to copy after the pattern, than to pay attention to the instructions, of their superiors. And indeed, when the former of these contradicts the latter, it is not to be wondered that it loses all its authority. How is it imaginable that a servant should profit by the wholesome admonitions of a master, in whose countenance, language, and deportment, vice is every day held up to his view in its most hideous forms? Is it to be expected that lessons of meekness, pronounced by lips accustomed to wrath and violence, should persuade? Is it to be expected that censures on guile and dishonesty, should come with energy from a base and unprincipled heart? Is it to be expected that men should be deterred from intemperance and lewdness, by the remonstrances of those who live in a course of dissipation and criminal indulgence? Virtue, it is true, is no less amiable for its being reproached by their conduct, who would be understood to be its

a Psal. ci. 4—7.

friends. But then such masters must not wonder, that their servants regard their actions rather than their words, and by copying after these repay them in their own coin for the affronts they thus offer to decency and common sense.

On the contrary, where virtuous instructions and virtuous characters are in perfect unison, they will scarce fail to produce the desired effect on the minds of servants. Awed by the authority of the former, and allured by the sweetness of the latter, they will find it difficult to resist the dictates of truth, honour, and decency. Reproofs will strike their consciences with double force, and counsels insinuate themselves to their hearts with peculiar pleasure. They will be proud to imitate the virtues of their superiors, and dread the idea of drawing on themselves the censures of those, who are equally venerable and lovely in their eyes. And hence it commonly happens, though not always, that good masters have good servants; and people are generally disposed to form their opinion of the heads of families, by the behaviour of those who serve them.—It now remains,

THIRDLY, To consider the attention which it is incumbent on masters to pay to the *religious interests* of their servants.

Religion is a due regard to the authority of God: and those cannot be called good morals which do not proceed from that principle. It is, however, possible, that men who have no proper regard to the divine authority, may yet be induced, by the fear of man and a concern for their worldly interests, to behave themselves in the general with integrity, sobriety, and decency. But it is *religion* and that only which will infallibly secure the good morals of servants: they who fear God cannot allow themselves to do a bad action. And this is a good reason why the heads of families should use their utmost endeavours to promote religion among their domestics. If you would be served with integrity, attention, and cheerfulness, look well to this point. This object gained, whatever little indiscretions your servants may be guilty of, you may be sure your substance will not be purloined, your affairs neglected, or your authority affronted.

But religion is a concern that affects the personal interests of servants in the highest degree—their happiness both here and hereafter. A pious master therefore, separate from the consideration of the benefit that will accrue to his domestic concerns

from their fearing God, will earnestly wish to promote these their best interests. And how is this to be done? I answer, by seasonable counsels and admonitions. By a regular attention to family duty. And by requiring their constant and serious attendance on public worship. Subjects these on which we have largely insisted in a former discourse, and therefore shall only here subjoin a few general remarks, submitting them to the Christian prudence and benevolence of masters.

If then we would allure our servants to the love and practice of religion, we should, in the first place, do our utmost to conciliate their affection to us. Having gained their esteem and good-will, we shall have the more easy access to their hearts. Persuaded that we sincerely wish them well, they will the more readily attend to what we say.—Whilst we are endeavouring to convince them of the truth, and to make them sensible of the importance, of religion, we should take particular care that they have full proof from the general course of our behaviour, not only that we are ourselves persuaded of its truth, but that we do indeed consider it as by far the most important concern in the whole world. The fervour of our devotion, accompanied with the strictness of our morals, will have an effect to awaken their attention, at certain seasons, to these great matters.—But at the same time we should guard against a prejudice, which often nips the first serious thoughts in the bud, and creates a disgust that no reasoning can subdue: I mean a notion that religion is a severe, sour, ill-natured thing. Servants will narrowly watch their masters, and if they observe a continual gloom on their countenances, and a forbidding austerity and reserve in their manners, they will conclude that this business of religion which they talk so much of can be no very agreeable thing. We should therefore studiously avoid this great evil, and endeavour, by an open, frank, cheerful, good-natured deportment (all which I am sure religion teaches) to convince them, that it is as friendly to their present comfort, as to their everlasting happiness.—Events of a providential kind that are awakening, such as narrow escapes from danger, sickness, and particularly death when it enters our houses, should be carefully improved. At such times they will be more susceptible of religious impressions than at others, and affectionate counsels addressed to their

hearts on these occasions, will be likely, with the blessing of God, to produce very important effects.—Sufficient time we should allow them for recollection and prayer, and to this end guard against an evil which in too many families is the bane of religion, I mean frequent and late entertainments in the evening. How is it possible that servants distracted with the hurries of domestic concerns to very near midnight, should either before they go to rest, or at the early hour they are obliged to rise, have proper calmness or leisure for serving God in their retirements?—Serious books, particularly the Bible, we should put into their hands, earnestly wishing them to read them, and lay them to heart.—In fine, these and all other measures we take to promote the great object of their salvation, should be crowned with our fervent prayers to God, remembering ourselves, and taking pains to fix that sentiment on their minds, that the grace of God is absolutely necessary to renew the heart, and prepare men for another state.

And now, need any arguments be used to urge masters, who fear God, to their duty in all these particulars? Have you no tenderness for your servants—no compassion for their precious and immortal souls? Have you no wish that they may escape the wrath to come, and be happy with God for ever? Do you not consider their spiritual as well as temporal interests, in a sense entrusted to your care? Perhaps Providence sent them into your families for purposes of the most salutary nature. Perhaps, under the direction of Heaven, they left another house and came to yours, as Onesimus did to Paul, that you might *receive them for ever*. How great will be your joy, if, in the noblest sense, they should be born under your roof! if in their dying moments they should have it to tell you, that their admission to your family was the most favourable event of their life! And how unutterable will be the pleasure you will feel on the great day of account, to hear it reported by the lips of the blessed Jesus, your Master and Judge, that you had been the instrument of saving this and that soul from the miseries of hell, and forming them for the happiness and glory of heaven!

Thus have we considered at large the reciprocal *duties of masters and servants*. And we will now close the whole with reminding one another of the character and conduct of the bless-

ed God, as our Master, towards us; and of ours, as servants, towards him. As to God, my brethren, his character as a Master is perfect in the highest degree. He hath an uncontrolled authority over us, to which he is entitled by every imaginable consideration: and that authority is exerted in concurrence with infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness. He requires obedience to his will in all things, and in doing so he consults our good, as well as his own honour. And like a good Master as he is, he fails not to instruct willing servants in their duty, to assist them in the discharge of it, and to reward them infinitely beyond their deserts. Their numerous failings he overlooks and forgives; and as on the one hand he gently reproves them when they do amiss, so on the other their humble and cordial endeavours to conform to his pleasure, he graciously approves and commends. Indeed, his conduct towards them is in every circumstance of it truly admirable. But ah! how disingenuous has been our character, and how base our conduct towards him! Have we obeyed him in all things? No. We have failed in ten thousand instances. Instead of serving him humbly, faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully, as we expect our servants should serve us; pride, infidelity, sloth, and reluctance, have too often disgraced our services. What cause have we for the deepest humiliation and contrition in his presence!

Let us acknowledge before him that we are unprofitable servants. Let us smite on our breasts, and penitently say, *God be merciful to us sinners.* Let us expect pardon and acceptance alone through the mediation of his Son, who took on him the form of a *Servant*, and became obedient to death, that he might reconcile us to our offended *Master*. Let this his amazing condescension, benignity and love, inspire our breasts with the noblest sentiments of gratitude and obedience. Let us feel the effect of this divine motive to engage us, as *Masters*, to exercise all due tenderness, compassion, and kindness towards our servants; and to dispose those of us, who are *Servants*, to render faithful and cheerful obedience to our masters. And may we all of us, Christians, whether *Masters* or *Servants*, be honoured with the approbation of our divine Master in the great day of account!—*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

DISCOURSE IX.

DOMESTIC FRIENDSHIP.

PSAL. CXXXIII.—*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

OUR great Creator hath wisely and benevolently implanted in our breasts a strong propensity to social connections. Feeling that we cannot subsist of ourselves, we look to our fellow-creatures for support, assistance, and protection; we covet one another's company, and are happy in contributing to each other's felicity. It is evident, therefore, that we are formed for the pleasures of friendship and society, and that these, next to the favour of God, are our chief enjoyments.

Now family connections are the first which take place among mankind, and those from which all other social connections originate. Marriage, which is a voluntary and permanent union of one man and one woman, was instituted by God, not only for the increase of the species, but for the purpose of promoting their mutual happiness, and that of their offspring. A family then is a little society, consisting of man and wife, their children, their servants, and such other relations or friends as may either dwell or occasionally sojourn with them. Now it may naturally be expected from the general idea of man as a social creature, and from that of a family as the first social connection, that friendship should prevail here in the highest degree it is capable of being enjoyed in the present state. And it must strike every one too on reflection, that the cherishing it in this connection is of no small importance to the welfare of the public as well as individuals: for the intercourses and

friendships which prevail in larger circles, take their rise and denomination from those of a domestic kind. To disseminate therefore the true grounds and reasons of this friendship, to hold up to view all the natural and pleasing expressions of it, and to afford every assistance in our power towards the cultivation and improvement of it, are the objects of this discourse.

To these objects our text naturally leads us. It contains a most cheerful and animated description of *domestic unity.* And however it is probable from the occasion on which the psalm was written, that the idea was meant to extend to a larger society than that of a family, yet it is evident that this is the primary sentiment in the text. The psalm is generally understood to have been composed on the final issue of the civil war, which so long prevailed between the two houses of Saul and David. A happy and memorable event this, upon which the king of Israel with no small pleasure congratulates his countrymen, wishing them in the character of brethren henceforth to enjoy the sweets of internal peace and prosperity! And happy it is indeed to see neighbouring states, especially the subjects of one kingdom, at peace among themselves. Happy it is likewise to see all other public bodies of men, particularly religious societies or churches, in friendship and harmony. But families are the little societies we have in our eye, and to that idea we shall restrain the language of the text.

There are three things observable in the words, which we shall briefly explain before we proceed to the main argument to be discussed—the manner in which a family is described—the particular domestic virtue recommended—and the psalmist's commendation of it.

First, A family is described as a society made up of *brethren that dwell together.*

Mankind in general are *brethren*, as they derive from the same stock, are of the same species, possess one common nature, and subsist after the same manner. *God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth* [a]. But this character with peculiar propriety belongs to those who compose one family, as they are united to each other by the most intimate and endearing bands of nature, and, if pious, of

[a] Acts xvii. 26.

religion too. The heads of it, husband and wife, are in a sense one; their children are parts of themselves; their relations and friends living with them are more nearly allied to them than others abroad; and their servants for obvious reasons are particularly interested in their regards. These are all described too as *dwelling together*, and on this account, as we shall more largely shew hereafter, they ought to consider one another as brethren and friends.

Secondly, The virtue recommended is *Unity*, that is, living together not merely in peace and upon general terms of good will, but in the most perfect amity, friendship, and affection. It is a unity that stands opposed not only to prejudice, malevolence, and hostility; but to neutrality, indifference, and reserve. As enmity, with all its wretched attendants of anger, clamour, and strife, should be for ever held at a distance from the house; so coldness, which is very nearly as inimical to domestic cheerfulness and happiness, should never be permitted to enter into it. All the members of the family, united in nature and interest, should most cordially esteem and love one another, and be ready on all occasions to contribute the utmost in their power to each other's felicity. Now,

Thirdly, In the commendation of this virtue the psalmist is very profuse.

Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Domestic friendship is most fit and right in itself, and highly conducive to the comfort of individuals and the happiness of the whole. There is something truly beautiful and lovely in it. Who can behold a family united by the sacred bands of harmony and love, without envying them of this felicity? Such a society is a little heaven upon earth, and makes the nearest approach to perfection of any civil connection whatever. Too much cannot be said in praise of it. Now all this the psalmist illustrates by two very pleasing comparisons.

The first is taken from the ointment poured on the head of the High Priest. *It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments.* Aaron was by divine appointment the High Priest of the Israelitish church,

His duty it was, arrayed in the sacerdotal garments, to offer sacrifice, intercede, and bless. At the proper seasons he approached the altar of God and the mercy-seat as their representative, and procured for them many great national blessings. And in this character he was an eminent type of Christ, who is the great High Priest of our profession, and through whose mediation we obtain peace with God, and all the blessings of grace and glory. To his office, so beneficial to the whole Jewish commonwealth or family, Aaron was initiated by the ceremony here referred to. An *ointment* of exquisite richness and fragrance was prepared, and poured by Moses upon his *head* at the door of the tabernacle *a*. From his head *it ran down upon his beard, even to the skirts* or skirt of his garment (for the word is in the singular number): not to the *lower skirt* of the sacerdotal robe, (for it is not probable, nor was it convenient, that the sacred oil should be poured upon him with such unnecessary profusion) but to the *upper skirt* of it, the *mouth* or *collar* of it, as the word signifies. The fragrance of this rich perfume instantly communicated itself to all who attended this most solemn and pleasing ceremony. They enjoyed the grateful smell, and were the more delighted with it as it was a sure omen of those peaceful and harmonious pleasures with which they were to be blessed through his mediation. Now *unity* among brethren, the psalmist tells us, is like the *ointment* thus poured upon the head of Aaron. There is a sweetness and gratefulness in it, especially when sanctified by genuine piety, that fails not to make all the members of the family happy, and to refresh and entertain those who occasionally associate with it. Oh! how the aromatic savour of this rich cordial diffuses itself through the house, just as did the precious odours with which Mary anointed the feet of the Prince of peace, at the entertainment made for him at Bethany *b*.

The next figure by which the psalmist illustrates what he commends, is taken from the dew. 'It is,' says he, 'as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore.'

a See Exod. xxx. 22—ult.—Lev. viii. 12. *b* John xii. 3.

Dew is a small thick kind of mist or rain, which sometimes falls in a gentle, imperceptible, and plentiful manner on the earth; and contributes not a little to the beauty and fragrance of the garden, and the verdure and fruitfulness of the field. It descends in great abundance in some countries, at particular seasons of the year, and is justly considered as a very great blessing. Mount Hermon, situated on the northern border of the promised land, without Jordan, was famous for it. On which account the psalmist elsewhere poetically describes *Tabor and Hermon as rejoicing in God a.* The dew is also said *to descend on the mountains of Sion,* that is, "the dew of Hermon descended on those mountains," for so the words should be strictly rendered. And if it be enquired how this could be, the answer is, that the clouds which lay on Hermon, being brought by the north winds to Jerusalem, might cause the dews to fall plentifully on that place. But some have thought that not Jerusalem, but *the lower parts of mount Hermon* are here intended. For it is remarkable that Hermon is actually called Sion in the book of Deuteronomy *b.* And so they conclude that the summit of that mountain had the particular name of Hermon, and the lower part of it that of Sion. And this being the case, they understand the psalmist as making a further comparison, between *the precious ointment* upon the head of Aaron that ran down unto his beard, and so to the skirts of his garment; and *the dew of Hermon* that descended from the summit of that hill to the parts below *c.*

a Psal. lxxxix. 12.

Mr. Maundrell, in his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, speaking of the two mounts, Tabor and Hermon, says, "We were sufficiently instructed by experience what the holy psalmist means by *the dew of Hermon,* our tents being as wet with it as if it had rained all night." See p. 57. edit. 3d.

b Deut. iv. 48.

c This interpretation of the passage Dr. Pococke gives us in his *Observations on Palestine.* "If any one," says he, "considers this beautiful piece of eloquence of the psalmist, and that Hermon is elsewhere actually called Sion, he will doubtless be satisfied, that the most natural interpretation of the psalmist would be to suppose, though the whole might be called both Hermon and Sion, yet that the highest summit of this mountain was in particular called Hermon, and that a lower part of it had the name of Sion; on which supposition, the dew falling from the top of it down to the lower parts, might well be compared in every respect to 'the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto

But I should rather suppose *the mountains of Sion*, properly so called, are here intended: for to these what is immediately added best and only agrees,—*there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.* On these mountains Jehovah, the God of Israel, was pleased to erect his palace, therein he resided, there he from time to time met his favourite people, accepted their sacrifices, answered their prayers, and poured both temporal and spiritual blessings upon them. And if we consider Sion as a type of *the Christian Church* in its present and especially its future glorious state, there is a further more striking and significant emphasis in the phrase of his *commanding there the blessing, even life for evermore:* for the best and noblest blessings God has bestowed on his church which he hath redeemed by the blood of his Son. Now the dew of Hermon might, as we observed before, literally speaking, fall upon mount Sion. Or if that is not the sense of the words, the dew of Hermon might be a figure of those refreshing and enlivening joys which so plentifully descended on the tribes of Israel and Judah, harmoniously assembled from time to time in the temple at Jerusalem: and it was natural enough for the psalmist to make a transition from the one to the other. And these blessings poured on the Jewish church, may be justly considered as further figurative of the superior blessings the Christian church now enjoys, and will hereafter possess in all their perfection. And so we are naturally led to run the parallel between the pleasures of *domestic friendship* and those peculiar to *Christian societies.* The former, especially if families are religious, very much resemble the latter. What sweet peace, harmony, and love, prevail in societies, formed on the plan Christ and his apostles have laid down, and consisting of individuals actuated by the genuine spirit of the gospel! Like brethren, in the noblest sense of the expression, they dwell together in unity, bearing with one another, sympathising with one another, and labouring to promote one another's real welfare. And such is that *domestic friendship* we mean to recommend. The families

the beard, even unto Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing;' and that both of them in this sense are very proper emblems of the blessings of unity and friendship, which diffuse themselves throughout the whole society." Vol. ii. Part i. Book i. Ch. xviii.

where it is enjoyed may be compared to the mountains of Sion, to churches established in this and that place, yea I will add to the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. *God commands the blessing* upon such families, *even life for evermore.* And to them our salutations should be directed as were the apostle's to that of Priscilla and Aquila, *Greet the church that is in their house* [a].

The words thus explained, we proceed to a more particular consideration of the nature and blessedness of *Domestic Friendship.* By this virtue we mean that good-will, harmony, union, and affection which ought to prevail among the several members that compose a family. In discoursing of this subject we shall,

FIRST, Lay down the true and proper grounds of *Domestic Friendship;*

SECONDLY, Enumerate some of the natural and pleasing expressions of it; and,

THIRDLY, Give sundry directions for the cherishing and promoting it.

FIRST, We begin with laying down the true and proper grounds of *Domestic Friendship.* Now these are—*Relation*—*Character*—*Vicinity*—and *Interest.*

I. *Relation.*

Between beings that bear little or no relation to each other, there can be little or no friendship. On the contrary, relation begets friendship, and the more intimate the relation is the stronger is the inducement to it. Now mankind do all possess one common nature, and this is a reason why they should all cultivate friendly dispositions towards one another. But family-relation is the most intimate in nature, and therefore a ground of friendship that demands particular attention. We have already enumerated the several members of which families usually consist: but we must here take a more particular view of them, in order to shew how favourable the relation that subsists between them is to the idea of friendship.

The union between *man and wife* is, or however ought to be, the result of previous esteem and affection; and it is so very intimate, so mutually beneficial, and so permanent, that one would

a Rom. xvi. 5.

think it could not subsist without the most endearing and improving friendship. It is affirmed, I think, of some ancient lawgivers that, in order the more intimately to connect the idea of friendship with marriage, they forbad all gifts between man and wife; thereby signifying that, as they were in effect one, all should belong to each of them, and that they had nothing to divide or give. And indeed the very terms *marriage* and *friendship* may very properly be considered as synonymous; and most certainly would be so in every instance, if the original dictates of nature were not perverted in the most shameful manner. What worse than brutes must they be who, thus connected, have no tenderness, good-will, and esteem for each other! Instinct and reason unite to form this friendly connection, to confirm and improve it, and to carry it to its highest perfection.

The relation too between *parents and children* is most favourable to friendship. Equality indeed is wanting here, but there is every other imaginable consideration to balance the account. Both parties are the same flesh and blood; and consanguinity surely is a natural ground of friendship. The instinctive kind of affection implanted in their breasts towards each other is so strong, that it is almost impossible for them, were they ever so willing, to eradicate it from their breasts. With what fondness do parents clasp their young offspring in their arms! And with what eagerness do children cling about their parents, as their best and never-failing benefactors! And the innumerable tender offices which result from this instinctive affection in early life, lay a foundation for the noblest and most durable friendship, when the understanding of children fully opens, and they advance towards maturity. How strange then would it be, if parents and children were not friends!

The same may be said, with some little variation, of the relation between *brothers and sisters*. These derive from one stock, and are of one blood. And if this connection has not so much of instinct in it as the former, it has nevertheless very strong affection in it. And then the circumstance of equality gives it the advantage in regard of friendship above that of parents and children. In short, it is generally considered as a relation that almost necessarily begets friendship: and therefore when peace and good-will are said to prevail between particular

persons, they are often described by the figurative language of *brethren.*

Indeed *servants* on some accounts may not seem within the line of friendship, but on others they are. Inferiority of character and condition requires some degree of distance and reserve on the one part, and humility and reverence on the other. But all this may very well consist with friendship, for equality of station and circumstances is not necessary, though it may be favourable to it. As to nature, which is the main thing, there is an equality here. And between the condition of servants and children there is no great distance. For *the heir as long as he is a child,* says the apostle, *differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all a.* But if we consider the purpose for which a servant is introduced into a family, namely, that of assisting it and making it happy, and add to that the other circumstances of continuance, intercourse, and mutual interest, which we shall enlarge more upon hereafter, this relation will be found to lay a good ground for friendship. And instances there have been not a few of servants, who after a time have become almost as natural to a family as the children of it. Service then, undertaken and rendered in a proper manner and with right views, is a good opening to friendship.

And then as to persons, whether related or not, who are *inmates* or *sojourners* in a family, their situation surely is favourable to what we are recommending. It throws them into a connection that fails not to draw out to view what will either attach people to, or prejudice them against, one another. Nor will this relation, the result of voluntary agreement, long continue, if aversion prevails. And as to those who occasionally visit the family, they are usually either acquaintance, or relations and friends.—*Relation* then is a natural and proper ground of friendship. So is,

II. *Character.* In which I include the ideas of features, temper, sentiment, manners, circumstances, and religion. A similarity in these particulars naturally begets friendship. And such similarity is more likely to be met with in families than elsewhere.

Between parents and their children there is often a likeness in *person* and *features,* and this is a circumstance which hath

a Gal. iv. 1.

rather a tendency to excite complacency than aversion. The very notion of another's resembling ourselves shall insensibly beget a predilection in our breasts in their favour.

But *temper* has an immediate and powerful influence on all friendly attachments whether moral or religious. Now among relations there is frequently if not always a resemblance in natural disposition. For temper depends a good deal on the construction of the body, and the temperament of the animal spirits: and these in children who derive from the same parents are generally very similar. Hence we often find good-nature, sprightliness, and vivacity running through a whole family, and distinguishing them from others in the same manner as do the features of their countenance. And surely this is no inconsiderable inducement to friendship. How can it possibly be otherwise than that a good-natured family should love one another! And indeed be the prevailing temper that marks their characters what it may, it will be likely to beget attachment.

Similarity of *sentiment* too has a great influence in producing and establishing friendships. Two people who think alike on most subjects, on communicating their ideas, will instantly conceive an esteem and affection for each other. The kindred souls, cast as it were in one mould, will unite, and with passionate fondness embrace: a remarkable instance of which we have in David and Jonathan. Now though in families there is sometimes a diversity of sentiment, yet it is more generally otherwise. And though the nearest relatives do not always possess the like natural abilities, nor are always alike pious, yet, be the cause what it may, whether education, intercourse, or prepossession in each other's favour, it most commonly so happens that there is a uniformity of sentiment in families respecting matters civil, moral, and religious. And how much this contributes to domestic friendship I need not say.

Similarity also of *manners* must not pass unnoticed. By manners here I mean external behaviour. And this every one knows by his own feelings has a kind of mechanical effect to create attachment or aversion. The countenance, language, attitude, and address of one man, shall almost instantly produce a pleasing or painful sensation in another that observes him. And these are as various as men's modes of thinking, their edu-

cation, and the kind of company they keep. But the general outlines of them, which may be classed under the ideas of urbanity or gentleness, and rusticity or plainness, are very nearly similar in the several members of a family. The like cast of behaviour runs through the whole house. And this tends to beget union, and so to promote the interests of domestic friendship. Were families usually to consist of persons whose manners are totally dissimilar, the effect would be distance, reserve, and disgust: but the contrary being the case, this no doubt is a circumstance favourable to friendship.

As is also a similarity in their *condition* or mode of subsistence. Friendships are seldom contracted between persons in exalted and in low stations of life. People so circumstanced are at too remote a distance to converse with that freedom, confidence, and pleasure which the cordiality of friendship demands. But in families there are no obstructions of this sort to the union we are recommending. Their mode of life is very nearly the same. Or if there is a difference, as there no doubt is and ought to be, between the condition of parents and children, and that of masters and servants; it is by no means so considerable as to create prejudices at all inimical to friendship. On the contrary, being all embarked as it were on board the same vessel, living upon the same general plan, and faring much after the same manner; there is little or no cause for discontent and envy, those miserable passions which too often tear asunder the most agreeable connections.

But it is *religion*, as we shall hereafter more largely shew, that contributes most to domestic friendship. Indeed, it is not every family that is religious: nor can it be said of those families which are so, in every instance, that each member of them is religious. Yet when real piety prevails in the breasts of those who preside, it very often diffuses itself, like the ointment poured on Aaron, among the inferior branches of the house. And a similarity of character in this respect cannot fail of being a ground of the most cordial and permanent friendship. In such families there will be no difference of opinion in what is essential to religion, and of consequence no disputes on those matters that will divide and alienate them from one another. Their tempers will be all meliorated and softened, and their conduct

free from those immoralities and follies which are the bane of friendship and love.

III. *Vicinity* comes next to be considered, as a ground or reason of domestic friendship.

Remoteness of situation is a great obstruction to friendship. Indeed it cannot subsist at all between people that never saw one another, and have no opportunity of exchanging sentiments and passions. The ingenuity of mankind, it is true, hath devised means to remedy, in a degree at least, this inconvenience. By the medium of epistolary correspondence, persons at the remotest distance are enabled to communicate their ideas to each other, and so to fan the flame of mutual affection. And it must be acknowledged that temporary absence has sometimes a happy effect to sharpen the edge of friendship, and, by putting love to the trial, to heighten and improve it. But, in the ordinary course of things, it is the immediate presence of a friend, and personal intercourse with him, that excites and keeps alive this generous passion.

Now family connections afford these incitements to friendship in the most agreeable manner. Brothers and sisters who dwell under the same roof have no occasion to take tedious journies to see each other, they are not obliged to ransack their memories to revive the idea of one another's virtues, nor are they under the necessity of committing to writing, or entrusting to a messenger, the tender sentiments they wish to communicate. Growing together like a cluster of cherries from the same bough, and in continual contact, they cannot fail of being fond of one another. Their persons, their actions, their amiable qualities, and every thing about them that is adapted to excite esteem and love, are in full view. They see one another morning, noon, and night, most familiarly converse with one another, and are ever at hand to bear one another's troubles, to assist one another's labours, and to partake of one another's pleasures. Embers heaped together will keep alive a long time, but separated quickly go out; so frequent intercourse cherishes and improves friendship, but distance cools and destroys it: or if that is not the case, long absence creates sadness and melancholy. But family-intimacy is an antidote to these evils, and supplies every imaginable motive and mean to promote mutual harmony and love.

Hence the church of Christ, in which the purest friendship is meant to prevail, is often in Scripture described as a house or a family. And this is one, among many others, of the pleasing figures used to represent the blessedness of heaven. *In my Father's house*, says our Saviour, *are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you* a. As if he had said, "Heaven is the house of God: there he the Father of the family dwells, and there all the children and servants of it reside. They compose one society, and that society never breaks up. They do not see one another now and then only, but are always together. They do not suffer the pain, nor are they ever liable to the coldness and neutrality, occasioned by distance: but dwelling continually in each other's company, their friendships are firm and constant, and their pleasures uninterrupted and eternal." Once more,

IV. And lastly, *Interest* is another ground of domestic friendship.

It is easy to conceive how persons may be so circumstanced, as to render it of little consequence whether they are in habits of friendship with each other, provided they are not sworn enemies. But it is otherwise in a family. All the members of it are so nearly related or connected, that their interest is mutual, and of consequence their being on friendly terms with each other is a matter of the last importance. It is with a family as it is with the body. *Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it* b. So nothing can happen to any branch of a family, without the whole being affected by it. They are all sharers in one another's sufferings and pleasures. No species of adversity can enter a house, whether it be poverty, dishonour, sickness, or death; but every individual will be more or less hurt by it. And no prosperous circumstance can make any one of them happy, without their being all benefited by it. Embarked on board one bottom, if a storm arises, they are all exposed to the like danger. Possessed of one common stock, it is the interest of every one to improve it. If discord prevails, not only the personal comfort of each member is affected, but the happiness and the very existence of the whole are threatened. The idea there-

a John xiv. 2. b 1 Cor. xii. 26.

fore of family interest forbids all feuds and animosities. And interest as strongly pleads for the most cordial friendship. For nothing short of such friendship will effectually secure the civil and religious welfare of these little communities. Suppose perfect neutrality to take place in a family, and each one to be wholly employed in looking after his own concerns; the consequence in that case will be, not only the want of those pleasures which spring from friendly intercourse and mutual offices of kindness, but in a course of time irregularity, contention, poverty, and wretchedness. Whereas, on the contrary, sincere affection subsisting between the several branches of a house, the general good will be consulted; the duties of forbearance, condescension, sympathy, and benevolence will be regarded; and so the peace, order, and prosperity of the whole be promoted. The interest of individuals is here more intimately combined than in any other social connection whatever. *Interest* therefore is a true and proper ground of domestic friendship.

And now, if we lay all these ideas together—*Relation*—*Character*—*Vicinity*—and *Interest*, we shall see that family connection affords every imaginable mean and inducement to that unity which our text recommends, and which we shall more particularly describe and enforce in the following sermon.

PART II.

In discoursing of *Domestic Friendship*, we have proposed—to consider the true and proper grounds of it—to enumerate some of the natural and pleasing expressions of it—and to give sundry directions for the cherishing and promoting it. The first of these has been attempted, and we have shewn that *Relation*, *Character*, *Vicinity*, and *Interest* are the grounds Providence has laid for the raising this noble superstructure. We go on now,

Secondly, To enumerate some of the natural and pleasing *Expressions of Domestic Friendship.*

1. The first I shall mention is *Forbearance.*

Whatever similarity of sentiment, temper, and manners there may be in the general among the several members of a family, a thousand trivial circumstances will daily arise, and some perhaps of a serious kind, about which they will be differently minded.

And we know difference of opinion, among mankind at large, too often creates dislike, sometimes passion, yea, more than this, disgust, and in some instances downright malevolence. But a cordial established prevailing friendship will either wholly prevent, or in a great measure correct, these evils. Love will put out the eye of prejudice, annihilate some faults, or at least draw a veil over them. In a good-natured family, a thousand little mistakes that are every day committed will pass unnoticed; and with good reason, as they are of trifling consequence, and none of them the effect of ill-will. Here is no eagle-eyed censor stalking about the house, with a gloomy and reserved countenance, watching every action in order to fix criminality upon it. Or if this or that person is guilty of a fault which cannot escape notice, the candour of domestic friendship will quickly find an excuse for it, and it will be as quickly forgot.

The indulgent tempers of parents will connive at those follies of children that scarce need correction, and the prudence of good-natured masters and mistresses will leniently tolerate the unmeaning errors of their servants. Or if the mistake be of a kind that unavoidably excites sudden passion and displeasure, love will restrain these hasty sallies of anger, repress the heat, and almost instantly still the tempest into a calm. At all events, however, we may be sure the effect will not be disgust and hatred. The sun will never go down upon the wrath of the father, nor will the tender bosom of the mother harbour resentment. The children, sensible of their faults, will not be easy till they are reconciled: duty and love will stream from their eyes, and ingenuous sorrow confirm the friendship that was only shook, not broken. Such will be the case, too, between all the other branches of the family. Ill-will and revenge will rankle in none of their breasts, and if at any time a difference has arisen, each party will be unhappy till it is made up. What pleasing expressions are these of domestic unity! All disposed to yield to one another's opinions in indifferent matters rather than fall out. All disposed to put the most candid constructions on each other's words and actions. All disposed as speedily to quench the flame of contention as it hath suddenly broke out, *the younger submitting them-*

selves unto the elder; yea, all of them subject one to another [a].

And indeed what is domestic friendship good for, if it does not produce these effects? Although we could suppose some general regard to subsist among the members of a family towards each other, yet if that regard had little or no influence to correct peevishness, to meliorate obstinacy, to restrain passion, and to prevent prejudice and disgust, how could they be happy? Sullen reserve would spread a gloom through the whole mansion, or noisy contention disturb the repose of it. If harmony has in it a fragrance like the ointment poured on the head of Aaron, suspicion and jealousy have in them the bitterness of gall, and the rancour of poison. And if unity hath in it all the sweetness of the falling dews on mount Hermon, the reverse of it, strife, may be compared to thunder, tempest, and lightning, which spread horror and destruction wherever they come. Happy family, where all drink of the pleasant cup of friendship, without a drop of ill-nature in it? where all bask under the smiling beams of the sun of peace, undisturbed with the rolling horrors of thundering contention!

2. *Sympathy.*

This is another very natural and important expression of domestic friendship. By sympathy I here mean feeling one another's troubles; for of our joys we shall speak hereafter. Now this is a temper we owe to all our fellow-creatures, but more especially our friends. Friendship united with humanity impels us by a kind of instinct to sympathy. We do not stay to reason upon the matter, but instantly upon seeing our friend in distress we are affected just as he is. The pungency of our feelings is the result of a combination of causes, such as tenderness of animal nature, a lively perception of the evil we commiserate, ardent love to the sufferer, and an apprehension of our own liableness to the same miseries. And the effect is important to the person who is the object of our pity, even though we have it not in our power to afford him actual relief. The tears of sympathy are very consoling to the afflicted, for by possessing him of the idea that others are sensible of what he feels, and are disposed to assist him, they excite a pleasing sen-

[a] 1 Pet. v. 5.

sation in his breast, soothe his ruffled passions, and compose his mind to his situation.

Now domestic society, if real friendship prevails in it, will exhibit to our view the most artless and affecting expressions of the virtue we have been describing. To realize some of these tender scenes will both edify and please. There is not a family on earth exempt from affliction. Pain and distress in some form or other have access to every habitation, to the mansions of the great as well as the cottage of the peasant: and it rarely so happens that there is not one or more in a house that has not some complaint to make him unhappy. So that occasions for sympathy frequently arise.

Is the husband laid on a bed of sickness! The tender wife will be his nurse, she will make his bed for him, she will administer his medicines to him, she will watch his disorder, pour her tears over him, and bear his pains with him. Whatever are his cares and anxieties, unbosoming his soul to her, he will have the comfort of her tender sympathy, and soothing counsels. And she again in the like circumstances will not fail of receiving the like regards from him. Oh the sweet pleasures resulting from such mutual offices of tenderness and love!—the one party striving to alleviate the other's burden by bearing it with him, and to give a more easy flow to the other's sorrows by turning his own into the same channel!

The wants attendant on infancy and childhood are sure to excite maternal sympathy. And what a gratification to a humane and friendly heart, to observe the expressions of this passion as it prevails in the breast of the fond mother! See her sitting by the cradle or the bed of her young sickly offspring. Her countenance strongly marks the pangs of her heart. She pours out her soul at her eyes, listens with incessant solicitude to every groan, and feels with greater anguish than her dear infant every pain it suffers. Her ease, her food, her health, she forgets, amidst the cares of her tender breast for its welfare. In like manner, the feelings of the father for the distresses of his children, though not expressed in the same soft and delicate manner, are yet no less pungent and affecting. Are they in danger? how anxious is he for their safety! Are they abroad,

at a distance? how impatiently does he wish their return *a*! Are they miserable? how does he bear a part with them, whatever may have been the cause, in their wretchedness! This passion our Saviour inimitably describes in the parable of the prodigal son, where we see it bursting like a torrent over even the fences, which the folly and ingratitude of a profligate youth might be supposed to raise about it *b*. And where domestic friendship prevails in all its vigour, the children will richly pay back into the bosoms of their afflicted parents the tribute of sympathy, they so largely received from them in their early days. Did the mother, as we have seen, foster them in the arms of tender pity, make all the wants and feelings of their infant state her own, and deprive childhood of almost every anxiety by taking the burden on herself? They, when grown up, will cherish the same tender sentiments in their breasts towards her. The disquietudes, pains, and languors of declining age they will attenuate by commiseration, and watch her dying pillow with the same attention that she rocked their cradle. The sympathy also of the father will not fail to receive similar returns of filial affection, when affliction demands such returns at their hands.

Brothers and sisters too, in the family where love dwells, will be the partakers of each others' griefs. A sigh will not pass unnoticed, nor a tear fall unpitied. If a Lazarus is sick, his sisters, overwhelmed with sorrow, will address their passionate cries to the best physician, saying, *Lord, hasten to our help, for he whom thou lovest is sick c.* And he again will be touched in the same manner with the feeling of all their infirmities.—Nor will the servants of the family endure any trouble without the seasonable aid of friendly commiseration.

The troubles of the mind are more distressing than any other: *A wounded spirit*, says Solomon, *who can bear d?* But if religion prevails in a family, such affliction, when it is known, will not fail to meet with the tenderest sympathy. When it is

a Decrevi————
Nec mihi fas esse ulla me voluptate hic frui,
Nisi ubi ille huc salvus redierit meus particeps.
TER. *Heauton.* Act I. Sc. I.

b Luke xv. *c* John xi. 3. *d* Prov. xviii. 14.

known, I say, for it is the character of religious melancholy to retire into a corner, and conceal itself in modest reserve. The pious and affectionate brother will, in such a case, mingle his tears with his sister's, and alleviate her grief by making it his own. "I have felt, he will kindly tell her, what you feel. I have had my hours of dejection as well as you. The same fears which oppress your breast, respecting the displeasure of God, have afflicted mine. Be not unduly discouraged. Yield not to the suggestions of unreasonable unbelief. God is merciful. The blessed Jesus has a heart to pity you. It will be all well by and by. *The vision is for a time: though it tarry, wait for it* a. *He will appoint you the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness* b."

Trouble is lessened by being divided, and sympathy is a cordial to the afflicted when all other medicines fail. How happy the house where this cordial is always at hand!—the house in which *there is no schism, no division; but the members have the same care for one another: so that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it* c! Nor are we to suppose that any family is so circumstanced, as that occasion for the exercise of this virtue rarely offers. Besides the great outlines of human evils, such as sickness, poverty, worldly perplexities, and spiritual troubles, of which we have spoken; there are a thousand lesser cares, pains, and sorrows, which daily call for the lenient aid of sympathy. This expression therefore of domestic friendship will scarce ever be quiescent in the families we are describing. If care sits on the brow of one, it will communicate itself to another, till the occasion is explored, and the cause removed. If one feels a pain, though but slight and transient, the rest will feel the same sensation. If the mother's breast heaves with a sudden pang of grief, the tears will quickly trickle down the cheeks of the daughter. If the father is pensive and sad, the son will look grave and melancholy. If any one in the house is unhappy, the happiness of all will be affected by it. In short, the mechanism of domestic friendship resembles that of the human body; if but a nerve is touched, the sensation is instantly communicated to the remotest part: or like a musical instrument,

a Hab. ii. 3. b Isa. lxi. 3. c I Cor. xii. 25, 26.

if one chord receives a jar, the melody of the whole will be disturbed.—This leads me to speak,

3. Of *Assistance.*

A friendship that does not influence men's actions, however warmly professed, is of little account. If I love another, I shall aim and endeavour to do him good: indeed, benevolent actions will become so habitual to me, that I shall be serving him even when I can scarcely be said to be thinking of him. In such manner the several members of a good-natured family will render each other those offices of domestic friendship, which fall under the idea of *Assistance.* The whole business of the house, from day to day, and from morning to night, will be a perpetual exchange of beneficial services.

The master will be employed in his particular occupation, trade, or profession, to procure the necessary means for the subsistence of the family. His ardent friendship for them will induce him to exert all his sagacity, influence, and ability, in order to improve his circumstances; that like a good householder, *he may give them their portion of meat in due season a.* His authority as a ruler within his house will be prudently and mildly exercised, for the purpose of promoting peace, good order, and mutual benevolence. Nor will he be unmindful, if a man of religion, of their best interests: these will be the objects of his zealous attention and ardent prayers. To hold them back from sin, to cherish in their breasts the early seeds of piety, and to aid them in their path to heaven, will be the delight and joy of his heart.

The mistress, like the virtuous woman in the Proverbs, will preside over the affairs of the house with attention and discretion. By her economy and industry she will hold poverty at a distance, and make smiling plenty abound. She will so arrange the businesses of all under her care, as that every one may be subservient to the other's support and happiness. *She will open her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue will be the law of kindness. She will look well to the ways of her household, and not eat the bread of idleness. Her children will arise up, and call her blessed: her husband also, he will praise her b.*

The younger branches of the house, of both sexes, will be

a Luke xii. 42. *b* Prov. xxxi. 26—28.

employed about such works of art, or such literary pursuits, as are suited to their age, and will render them serviceable to the family, as well as qualify them to be useful members of society. —The sisters, we shall see, under the guidance of the prudent and careful mother, either giving *meat to the household, and a portion to the maidens*, or *laying their hands to the spindle and the distaff*, or *stretching them forth to the poor and needy*, or *making coverings of tapestry, and clothing of silk and purple a.* The brothers, by their improvements in knowledge, and their other active exertions, will add to the general stock of domestic support and happiness.—The servants too in their different departments will, agreeable to their proper character, be assisting to the whole. So that the various wants of all the house will be regularly and constantly served by reciprocal offices of duty and love.

What a happy family this, to which idleness, ill-nature, and gloominess have no admission, and in which every one contributes his utmost to the general good! To such a little society what our Saviour says of that more numerous and happy one over which he presides, may be accommodated: *One is your Master, and all ye are brethren. He that is greatest among you shall be your servant; and he that humbleth himself among you shall be exalted b.* And if the utility and loveliness of these expressions of family duty may be illustrated by their opposites, let us attend a moment to the sad lamentation which the pangs of domestic adversity extorted from the lips of the patriarch Job. 'He hath put,' says he, 'my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me c.'

a Prov. xxxi. 15, 19, 20, 22. b Matt. xxiii. 8, 11, 12. c Job xix. 13—21.

That it is the voice of nature, that the several members of a family should mutually assist and support each other, is not to be doubted. If, however, there is occasion yet further to illustrate and enforce this duty, there are creatures of a much lower rank than ourselves which will give us useful lessons on the subject. The bee-hive, visited with attention, will exhibit such a scene of domestic government, industry, and regard to the general good, as will at once instruct, astonish, and entertain. And if the slothful and selfish in a family would *go to the ant, and consider her ways*, explore with a curious and careful eye her habitation, the manner in which she collects and lays in her provisions, and the assistance she affords to her fellow-insects in their labours; they would learn not only to be industrious but friendly *a*. These little animals, impelled by an instinct which nature has implanted, do that which reason teaches every member of a family it is his duty and interest to do *b*.

a Prov. vi. 6—8. xxx. 25.

b Mr. Addison has given us, in the *Guardian*, two papers on the natural history of Pismires or Ants, which abundantly confirm what Solomon has observed concerning them, and what is just hinted at above. His account is taken from a letter upon this curious subject, published by the members of the French Academy, and since translated into English; and which, he assures us, is of undoubted credit and authority. Not to speak here of the policy, industry, and cleanliness of these little insects, of which many wonderful and entertaining proofs are given in this letter; the reader will excuse me, if I make a few extracts to the purpose of illustrating the point more immediately in view, namely, *their readiness to help and serve one another*. The writer, having related the manner in which they collect and lay up their provisions, and the methods they take to secure themselves from inclement weather, and other evils, tells us, he observed "the strongest ants, who had carried their corn to their nest (which was in a box upon a window up two pair of stairs) come down again to help others that were climbing up the wall. One," he says, "whose strength failed her, stopped: and another helped her to carry her load, which was one of the largest and finest grains of wheat that an ant can carry."—"Having got a small piece of flat slate to lie over the hole of their nest, when they foresaw it would rain, about fifty of them surrounded that piece of slate, and drew it equally in a wonderful order."—Our ingenious enquirer had laid up, he tells us, a small heap of wheat in the corner of the room, upon the window of which was the box containing the nest: and having thrown one of the largest of his ants upon it, "she ran away to her nest to give notice of this provision; and in an hour after he saw most of them busied in carrying away the corn."——"Ants," he observes, "have nothing of their own: a grain of corn which an ant carries home, is deposited in a common stock: it is not designed for her own use, but

4. *Intercourse* or *Conversation* is the next expression of domestic friendship to be considered.

The wisdom and goodness of God in giving us a power of communicating to each other by articulate sounds the sentiments and feelings of our hearts, cannot be enough admired and acknowledged. Nor is there any connection in which this faculty may be exerted with such advantage as in a family. If the several members of it are virtuous, sensible, and religious, it will be the happy medium of diffusing every day and hour, a thousand joys through the house. Regard to God will secure their discourse from indecent levity, good sense will stamp dignity on it, sprightliness will infuse pleasantry into it, and the intimacies of domestic friendship will give it an ease and freedom scarce to be met with any where else.

There is a kind of language some happy people are accustomed to, in the common intercourses of life, and when employed about the affairs of the house, that hath a tincture of sweetness and gentleness in it admirably expressive of the good will they bear to each other. No loud vociferation, no harsh sounds, no angry words grate upon your ear: all is soft, placid, and harmonious. Their questions and replies, their requests and commands, yea, their very reproofs and exclamations, are so worded, and uttered with such a tone, as shews they are on the most friendly terms with all about them. How happy where this mode of converse is habitual to the several members of a family! Scarce a moment passes in such an house without a mutual exchange of agreeable sensations, by the medium of pleasant looks, or easy and engaging language. On the contrary, when they

for the whole community. There is no distinction between a private and a common interest. An ant does not work for herself, but for the society."—"Though they never go into any other hole but their own, yet they are very ready to help one another out of their holes. They put down their loads at the entrance of a neighbouring nest; and those that live in it carry them in. They keep up a sort of trade among themselves. They lend their corn, they make exchanges, and are always ready to serve one another."

Guardian, No. 156 and 157.

The ingenious Mr. Smeathman's account of the Termites or White Ants in Africa, confirms the credibility of the above relation; and affords a great deal of entertaining information on this subject.

See *Philosoph. Transact.* Vol. lxxi. Paper xi. p. 139.

who preside affect, through a mistaken idea of their authority, a haughty magisterial kind of address, rather adapted to extort homage than to conciliate affection; and when they whose business is to obey, mingle moroseness and reserve with all their expressions of respect and duty, how great is the unhappiness! Little real friendship is to be expected in a dwelling, where pride and ill-nature have given such a cast to the familiar intercourses of it.

But it is not the passing intercourses of a moment that I have here chiefly in my eye. Frequent opportunities of continued discourse return, such as at the table, or other hours of recess from business. On these occasions, in a family of love, domestic pleasures will be enjoyed in the amplest and most endearing manner. Around the festive board, crowned with the smiling bounties of Providence, we shall see them discoursing with ease and cheerfulness, unembarrassed with modes and forms, and free from the painful restraints of jealousy and reserve. And in a long winter's evening, when the business of the day is over, we shall see them around the fire entertaining one another, not with malevolent talk about their neighbours, nor with idle insipid romances and plays; but with instructive and enlivening discourse on some subject in history, morals, or religion. How exquisitely pleasing must the friendly intercourses of such a little party be! Here is no dull melancholy, no cold reserve, no contentious animosity. Ease, good nature, and love shed their sweet and balmy influence over the company. Every one contributes his quota either of solid reasoning, pertinent observations, or agreeable wit and pleasantry. Sentiments and passions alike improving and endearing are mutually exchanged, and all arise, at the proper hour, from this rational and delightful entertainment, wiser, better, and happier.

The stated exercises, too, of religion in such a family, may very well be considered as expressions of domestic friendship, as well as devotion towards God. Religion has a mighty influence in forming friendships, and adding strength and permanence to them. The pious effusions of a devout heart in social prayer and praise are not only acceptable to God, but have a soothing, benevolent, and uniting effect in regard of those who concur in such acts of worship. Where a family enters into the spirit of

these duties, and Christ agreeably to his blessed promise is *in the midst of them* [a], methinks, it is impossible that they should arise from their knees without feeling that they love one another, and being sweetly disposed to render each other all the kind offices in their power. The noblest friendship prevailed, as we have had occasion more than once to observe, in the house of Lazarus at Bethany. Figure to yourself the Saviour entering it as their guest, Mary sitting at his feet, and the rest of the family hanging with attention on his lips; they proposing questions, and he answering them; both he and they mingling their joys and sorrows, and all of them forming as it were one soul. Figure to yourself, I say, this pleasing scene, and tell me whether the entertainment must not have been divine. How did friendship here display her glories in the highest perfection!—Further,

Particular intimacies are sometimes formed in families between brothers and sisters, or others, which open the way to a freedom of religious discourse scarce to be expected in a larger company. The religion of the heart is of a shy, modest, and reserved complexion: it retires from public view, and in many instances can hardly be prevailed on to disclose itself to bosom friends. But sometimes, as I said, it so happens that two or three in a house can be more free with one another on these matters than with any besides. And the effect of such freedom to solve their mutual doubts, alleviate their troubles, heighten their joys, and unite their affections, is considerable. You shall see them, in some retired room or solitary walk, laying open their most secret thoughts to each other, and thereby relieving themselves of a burden that would otherwise be unsupportable; or else pouring into each other's bosoms pleasures which are heightened by being communicated. Friendships of this sort have been productive of the greatest good. Virtue has thus, in a course of time, been drawn from concealment into public view. Religion in its infant state has been nursed and reared. And modest youth have been prepared for important services in life.—One more expression of domestic friendship remains to be mentioned, and that is,

5. And lastly, *Rejoicing in one another's welfare.*

[a] Matt. xviii. 20.

Where love prevails there is an union of interest, and where interest is united, the joys as well as the sorrows of one party are felt by the other: they are the joint stock of both. Wherefore, in a family of love, the pains and pleasures of every individual are in continual circulation through the house. And, as we have observed of the former, that they are alleviated, so it is true of the latter, that they are heightened by being communicated. It is impossible that each one should have a hearty affection for the other, and not be gratified by every agreeable circumstance that turns up in their favour. Now this being the case, a large family of the character we have been describing, is almost sure of enjoying a considerable degree of happiness. For it is much if some one does not possess health, ease, pleasure, honour, or some other blessing, either temporal or spiritual; and the rest, having a hearty good-will to him, must of consequence be sharers with him in these blessings. But if they all possess some this and some that enjoyment, how happy must they make one another by a mutual participation of so large a portion of good! And how must the pleasure resulting from the very exchange augment the happiness! Indeed, the happiness would be too great for the present life, if there were not a seasonable intermixture of occasional pains and sorrows.

Here imagination might present many pleasing scenes to our view for the illustration of the subject. Suppose, for instance, the master of the family to have met with some unexpected success in his worldly affairs. Providence smiles on his prudent schemes and honest labours, and pours a rich variety of wealth into his grateful bosom. The effect is not only felt in the liberal supply which every branch of the family receives, but in the cheerfulness that appears on all their countenances. Penury driven out of doors, and with it the anxieties it occasions, joys succeed which are the common lot of the whole house. If any one of them, brought down by sickness to the gates of death, is restored to health, how do they all exult in the event! The tidings are instantly told by their happy looks, and their congratulatory embraces. "We had just lost our father, our mother, or our child; but Providence has given him back again into our arms, let us rejoice and be glad." If a new alliance is formed, a daughter given in marriage, or a son agreeably settled in life;

the house resounds with festivity, and the happy young people are crowned with a thousand good wishes and prayers from every quarter. If a prodigal, that has disgraced his family, and made them wretched by his folly and sin, returns to his duty; a flood of joy pours in upon them. The fatted calf is killed, they eat, drink, and are merry: for, say they, *Our brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost and is found* a. To a house that fears God, what pleasure must it afford, to see this or that member of it, that had been thoughtless about his best interests, become wise unto salvation! Or to see this or that person who had been overwhelmed with sadness on account of his future state, emerge thence into the enjoyment of the sweet and refined pleasures of religion!

But besides these more considerable instances of the divine favour and goodness, which create general pleasure in a family, there are joys of a lesser kind which are in continual circulation —agreeable feelings, I mean, excited by their mutual pleasant looks, cheerful words, and good-natured actions. When all are aiming to banish melancholy, and to make one another happy, and the salutary aim is every moment to be read in their countenances, gesture, and language; it is impossible that the apprehension of this should fail of creating pleasure in each bosom. And thus pleasure accumulates on pleasure, and all is the result of this domestic friendship we are recommending. *How good then and pleasant is it for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

PART III.

HAVING considered the *grounds*, and enumerated some among many others of the pleasing *expressions* of domestic friendship, such as, *Forbearance*, *Sympathy*, *Assistance*, *Conversation*, and a *mutual exchange of joys*, it remains that we now,

THIRDLY, Subjoin a few directions for the cherishing and promoting this hearty good-will in the several members of a family towards each other.

1. Let the interest of the whole be preferred to that of a part.

This principle, founded in the truest reason, should be regarded in all social, especially domestic, connections. The interest, at least the imaginary interest, of one in a family often clashes

a Luke xv. 32.

with the welfare of the whole. This is the case when an individual is set upon gratifying his passion for personal ease, pleasure, and emolument; and declines all active and painful exertions for the general good. Such conduct may involve the whole house in ruin: it will however most certainly prove a great obstruction to its happiness. On the contrary, if the maxim we have laid down be regarded, and individuals are disposed to deny themselves for the sake of others, and to exert all their ability to promote their welfare; the general fund of happiness will be augmented, and the opposite evils resulting from a selfish temper prevented.

But to give effect to this maxim something further is necessary than coolly proving its reasonableness. We must endeavour to inspire one another with a generous benevolent spirit. Social feelings are exquisitely soft and pleasing. Happy man whose bosom glows with love to all his fellow-creatures, especially those to whom he is thus nearly allied! How can a human heart be an utter stranger to this passion! How can the several members of a family be indifferent to each other's welfare! How can any one be so entirely wrapt up in himself, as to prefer a little personal gratification to the content and happiness of the whole! Such a temper as this is base to the last degree. It is totally inconsistent with all idea of friendship. It is inimical to all social connections. And it renders a man utterly unworthy of all the benefits of society. He who is of this cast is rather a brute than a man, and is rather to be shunned with horror than tolerated by candour.

But it were easy to prove, strange as it may seem at first view, that public interest is in effect private interest: that is, public interest is the aggregate sum of private interest. He therefore who studies the welfare of the whole, studies the welfare of every part, and of consequence his own welfare. And by pursuing his own welfare, in this connection with that of others, he is much more likely to secure his object than if his attention were wholly fixed to himself. Besides, the personal good he thus gains is mightily enhanced in its value by its being intermingled with the general good. How sweet and enlivening to an ingenuous mind those joys which are shared in common with others! The force of this argument, addressed you see to

self-interest, every one must feel. Let parents then and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, be persuaded all of them *to look not on their own things*, as the apostle expresses it, *but also on the things of others* a. Forego, Sirs, this and the other advantage of a private kind for the good of the whole, and depend upon it you will in the end be the gainers thereby.

2. Let the affairs of the family be conducted with regularity, and every one not only know his proper station but be contented with it.

As tranquillity, peace, contentment, and happiness are ideas intimately connected with friendship, so whatever tends to promote these pleasures is of use to strengthen and confirm the band of domestic union. In all societies there are businesses of various kinds to be transacted. Every one has his department of service, and upon a due attention to it depends not only the prosperity of the whole, but the comfort of every individual. So it is in families. To the master it belongs to superintend the general interests of the house, and to enforce obedience to its laws and orders. The office of the mistress is to look after her household affairs, and see every thing conducted with prudence and economy. The children have each of them their duty, and the servants theirs. No one should invade the province of another, but all know the part they have to act; how this and that business is to be done, and the fit season for it. And as Providence has destined every one to his proper station in the family, pointing out to each his duty by the age, character, abilities, and rank he holds; so every one should make up his mind to his particular station, not envying those above him, or carrying it haughtily towards those beneath him. Matters thus conducted, the affairs of the house will go on smoothly and prosperously, each will have his share of tranquillity and pleasure, and so the happy union of the whole every day acquire additional firmness. Thus order will beget peace, peace contentment, contentment happiness, and happiness, union and love.

A house divided against itself, says our Saviour, *cannot stand* b. But what is it that creates division? Not merely the fiercer passions of malevolence and resentment. Sedition, in these lesser as well as larger communities, is often the fruit of mal-admini-

a Phil. ii. 4. b Matt. xii. 25.

stration in those whose business it is to govern, and of sloth and discontent in those whose duty it is to obey. If no order is observed in a family, and none are disposed to attend regularly to their duty, who can wonder that in this lawless state of domestic society the seeds of discontent and peevishness should spring up, and before it is long ripen into animosity, faction, and ruin?—And this leads me,

3. To inculcate the great duty of every one's endeavouring to get the due command of his temper.

Self-government is of the last consequence to the welfare of society in general, and to a man's own personal honour and happiness in particular. But we are here speaking of it in reference to domestic peace and friendship. Suppose self-conceit and obstinacy to prevail in a family, how tremendous must be the effect! Each one, fully persuaded he is right, will at all events have his way. The master angrily insists that the children and servants shall in every instance submit; and they again, losing sight of the duty they owe the master, think it hard that their will should not in this or that case be complied with. Their will is opposed—they rebel—and what is the result? Can we be at a loss one moment to determine? The spark kindles into a flame, the flame spreads through the house, and, if prudence and good-nature do not immediately interpose to check its progress, a total and terrible conflagration ensues.

Friendship is the generous offspring of wisdom, humanity, and religion. It is a plant of tender growth, and must be cultivated with attention and care. The sharp winds of frowardness and self-will, if not guarded against, will nip it in the bud. Sincere and prudent friends, therefore, will see it their interest to submit to one another in many points wherein their judgments differ. They will submit upon the wise and salutary principle, that, though the measure is wrong, the inconvenience of it had better be endured than a good understanding hazarded. And ought not such reasoning to prevail in families? Should not every member of the house be disposed to submit to the opinion and inclination of the rest, sensible that the consequence of obstinately adhering to his own pleasure, may be infinitely detrimental to the happiness of the whole? As a habit of yielding is truly glorious to him who has acquired it, so

it is fruitful of the most noble and happy consequences to those about him. It effectually prevents disunion, and draws the silken knot of friendship so close that no art can unloose it. The frequent sacrifice of pique and ill-humour, if mutual, will beget such passionate love to one another as no attempt from the demon of discord can subdue. The children will love even to distraction the parents that can now and then relax their authority, and yield, or at least seem to yield, to their opinions and persuasions. Such conduct too will bind servants, ingenuous servants I mean, more firmly to their master's interest than the strongest cords of rigour and authority. But at the same time it should be carefully remembered, that the age, character, and station of those who preside, entitle their opinion upon every matter to greater respect than that of any inferior. Indeed the peace of a family requires in most cases an absolute submission to their opinion, when such submission is insisted on. And I may add, that the mistaken opinion of superiors, in most instances, ought rather to be acquiesced in than the authority of the house disputed, its order deranged, and its tranquillity invaded.

If then there be any thing desirable and important in domestic union, let us be persuaded, each one of us, to restrain, correct, and subdue our natural tempers. Let us take pains to that end. Let us guard against every expression of peevishness and fretfulness, and particularly the rugged ill-natured efforts of obstinacy and self-will. Let us consider with ourselves the real glory we shall gain by submitting, the great utility of every act of self-denial to the purpose of meliorating our tempers, and the essential service we shall render our families by our meekness and forbearance.—The last particular of advice to be proposed is,

4. To make religion our grand object.

The favourable aspect which religion bears to domestic friendship must strike the most superficial observer. Nor do I know where to begin or where to end, when I attempt to display its excellencies in their reference to the matter before us. It teaches us, that God is love, that man was formed for society, that disunion is one of the main evils resulting from our apostacy, that our Saviour came down from heaven to reconcile us not only to God but to one another, to create peace on

earth and good-will among men, to break down the middle wall of partition between us, and to make those, who had been strangers and foreigners to each other, fellow-citizens and members of the household of God. These great truths it holds up to our view, possessing us of every possible argument to dissuade us from wrath, bitterness, and malevolence, and of every imaginable motive to dispose us to the practice of forbearance, gentleness, and love. It remonstrates against our angry passions, and pleads with our tender and social feelings, by the bowels of Christ and all that matchless love which induced him to endure the greatest evils, in order to restore to us this the greatest good, friendship. It presents us with the noblest examples of families in earlier and later times, which have been rendered truly happy, and have acquired no small honour, by paying a due attention to its sacred dictates. It leads us into the tents of the ancient patriarchs, the colleges of the Israelitish prophets, and the habitations of the primitive Christians; and exhibits therein such pleasing scenes of domestic simplicity, concord, and love, as cannot fail of charming every heart that possesses the least degree of sensibility. And having thus entertained us here on earth in the houses of a Lazarus at Bethany, a Priscilla and Aquila at Corinth, an elect Lady, and an hospitable Gaius; it conducts us to the fair mansions above, where God the Father dwells, *of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named;* where Christ the elder brother of the house appears in all his glory, and where the general assembly and church of the first-born are all united in the sweet bands of domestic friendship—bands which neither sin nor Satan shall ever tear asunder.

Do we then wish to enjoy this inestimable blessing in the tents Providence has pitched for us here on earth? Let us welcome the noble guest I have been describing into our hearts, give him the most cheerful entertainment there, and suffer him never to depart thence. To the sceptre of religion let us oblige all our angry, self-willed, and discordant passions to bow, to its authority let us render uncontrolled obedience, and its favour let us cultivate as the chiefest good. So will peace be within our walls, and prosperity within our dwellings. And so will our friends and neighbours, while they are the wit-

nesses of our happiness, say, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.'

Let us now close the whole with a few reflections.

1. The wisdom and goodness of divine Providence is admirable in so disposing things, as that men should be naturally and almost necessarily led into the enjoyment of this great blessing of domestic friendship.

Man was made for society, and friendship is the noblest cordial of human life. It is the duty and interest of all to love one another, and were the original dictates of nature duly attended to, malevolence and contention would have no existence in our world. But alas! the complaint we often hear is too true, that there is little friendship among mankind at large. Domestic connections however, depraved as human nature is, oblige men by a kind of necessity to be friendly to each other. And though there may possibly be many houses where the demon of strife hath erected his standard, and scatters destruction around him, yet friendship reigns in all its glory in some happy habitations, and there is the appearance of it in most.

Now this is owing to that wise arrangement of Providence we have been considering. God has so formed men as that they cannot subsist otherwise than in domestic connections. These relations are the fruit of his will and appointment: and tending, as they directly and powerfully do, to the great object of uniting in the most harmonious bands parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, the host and his guest, they afford a striking proof of his infinite benignity. Thus has he alleviated the evils incident to human life, and mingled cheerfulness and pleasure with the toils and troubles men are destined to endure in their journey through this world. Go we among the savage tribes of America, or the more civilized nations of Europe, we find these little communities subsisting in much the same manner, and enjoying family pleasures in pretty nearly the same proportion. The reverse of-

which would in all probability be the case, if the interests of individuals were not thus combined, and nature did not lead them by any invincible kind of instinct into these friendly associations.

2. It is further to be remarked, that as the grounds of domestic friendship are laid in nature, so divine revelation affords all imaginable support and encouragement to an institution which is thus manifestly of God.

Nature and the Bible are, in this respect as well as every other, in perfect harmony with each other. The doctrines, precepts, and histories of holy writ all tend to promote peace on earth, and good-will among men: but they bear an aspect peculiarly favourable to the interests of domestic life, which is the basis of all other social connections.

Families are here announced as societies which God hath established for the noblest purposes both civil and religious. The duties of men in this relation are clearly laid down, and enforced by various motives. The blessed God, in allusion to this first arrangement of nature, is described as the father of a numerous family, taking the most tender care of his children, bearing with them, forgiving them, conversing with them, and providing in a thousand ways for their support and happiness. Men are addressed as brethren of one another, and on this ground exhorted to the various duties of tender love, sympathy, and friendship. In the character too, of servants, they are admonished to all those offices which they owe to God their divine Master, and to the children of his family. The patriarchs with their numerous descendants are held up to our view in this relation, discharging the duties and enjoying the comforts of domestic life. The Israelites are described as one family, collected under the wing of Jehovah their Father, and served by angels and ministering spirits, sent forth to defend and bless them. Under this figurative idea the church of Christ is represented, and their numerous duties, honours, and privileges, placed in the most inviting and pleasing light. And from earth the Scriptures lead us up to heaven, and shew us the blessed God, in all the charms of an indulgent parent, encircled by his numerous offspring, for ever happy in the enjoyment of his favour, and the ravishing delights of domestic society. So well does the language of inspiration

agree with that of nature, in regard of the grounds of family union and friendship!

And this agreement between the one and the other is no inconsiderable presumptive evidence of the truth of revelation. Let the man who has attentively read his Bible say, whether it is not the object of this book, having first consulted the essential interest of individuals, to promote and cherish by the most powerful arguments that domestic union which nature inculcates. He who enters into the spirit of this sacred volume, instead of tearing asunder these sweet and pleasant bands of society, will feel himself disposed to enlarge and strengthen them to the utmost of his power.—Which leads me to observe,

3. And lastly, that every thing which tends to derange this original constitution of nature is highly offensive to God, and big with the most fatal miseries to mankind.

That form of government, be it what it may, that endangers the happiness, security, and existence of domestic society, is a bold invasion on the rights of nature. *Despotism*, by depriving men of their liberty and property, or at least rendering the possession of them insecure and precarious, is guilty of this great evil; and is therefore an offence against the supreme will and authority of God. Both profane and sacred history have told us, in lines written with blood, what havoc has been made on the peace and happiness of domestic life by an insatiable lust of power. See the house of the peasant laid waste, the mansion of the more wealthy torn from its foundation, families dispersed, and their very names obliterated! What a curse on mankind is war! and how tremendous an account have they to give, who, to gratify their ambition, cruelly sport with the rights of mankind, and impiously subvert these little communities, which owe their existence and establishment to the peculiar attention and regards of the merciful God!

But it is not only the lawless ambition and cruelty of princes that we have here to complain of. There are doctrines, too, which tend to divide mankind, to disturb the peace of families, and to endanger the very existence of domestic society. We cannot enumerate them particularly: there are two however that must not be omitted—The *celibacy* of the Romish church on the one hand—and the unnatural and unfriendly doctrine of

polygamy on the other. The former of these tends to the extinction of domestic society, and the latter to the total derangement and subversion of all its pleasures. Had these doctrines been found in the Bible, the enemies of revelation would not have failed to apply them to the purpose of bringing its authenticity into question. They would have set nature and Christianity at variance, and not doubted but in the scuffle the latter would suffer disgrace, if not total ruin. But it is a fact which we have already asserted, and will again affirm, that the religion of Jesus is an advocate not only for personal but domestic friendship. Not a word is to be met with here to discountenance that first great law of nature which leads mankind into conjugal union, and possesses them of all the sweet and rational pleasures that result thence. On the contrary, Antichrist is described when he comes, as *forbidding men to marry*, and thus offering violence to the express command of God *a*.—Nor is there a word to be met with to authorize the practice of a plurality of wives, which, were it to prevail, would degrade the softer sex from that rank which Providence meant they should hold in the intellectual world, would give vigour to the cause of despotism and tyranny, and convert the house our text so sweetly describes, into a horrid scene of anarchy and wretchedness. What then are they doing who maintain these doctrines, and endeavour to propagate them in the world? They are sapping the foundation of a most beautiful superstructure which God himself has raised. Or if they suffer it to stand, instead of saying, as our Saviour commanded his disciples to say, *Peace be to this house*, they bid detraction, envy, malice, strife, and every evil work enter into it.

In fine, all that conduct in individuals that tends to dissolve relations which God has established, to set similar characters at variance, to confound the interests and disturb the repose of families, and thereby to increase and magnify human evils; is highly criminal, and will not fail, as the Scriptures assure us, to bring down the righteous judgments of Heaven on those who are impenitently guilty of it. Let us then be persuaded to contribute all that lies in our power to the promoting that union among families here on earth, which is both a pleasing emblem

a 1 Tim. iv. 3.

and happy omen of that everlasting friendship which shall be enjoyed by all the family of God, in the house which their Father hath prepared for them in the world above.

DISCOURSE X.

HOSPITALITY.

1 Pet. iv. 9.—*Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.*

When the church of Christ is held up to our view, as it frequently is in Scripture, under the notion of a Household, the first idea that strikes our attention is that of Friendship. How sweet the harmony that prevails, or ought to prevail, in the family of which God is the Father, Christ the elder brother, the excellent of the earth the children, and angels the servants! But, this idea dismissed, that which succeeds to it is *Hospitality.* The doors of this house which God hath built, and not man, are thrown open, every stranger that enters meets with a hearty welcome; yea, the servants are sent out into the highways and hedges to compel men to come in *a.* Such is the benignity of the great householder, and such the generosity that breathes through the gracious invitations of the gospel! Can it be wondered then, that the first ministers of this gospel, having delivered their message, and persuaded men to come and partake of this the noblest entertainment; should exhort the happy guests, in the language of the text, to *use hospitality one to another, without grudging?* The apostle Peter had been often fed at the table of his divine Master, the bounty he there partook of had kindled an inextinguishable flame of charity in his breast, and that flame he ardently wished to communicate to every bosom that shared the same bounty with him. May this flame be kindled in each of our hearts!

a Luke xiv. 23.

We have discoursed at large of the Friendship which ought to prevail in Christian families, and are naturally led from thence to recommend the duty of *Hospitality*. The connection of the words chosen for this purpose, merits our particular attention. The apostle had reprobated in very severe terms the kind of hospitality, falsely so called, which obtained among the pagans—their *excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.* Of the Christians these pagans were used to speak in the most reproachful manner, *because they ran not with them to the same excess of riot.* But, says the apostle, these miserable debauchees who laugh at your temperance, shall shortly *give an account of themselves to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For, to this purpose was the gospel preached* to the Gentiles who were *dead* in sin, as well as to you; *that* such of them as are recovered from this wretched state, however *judged* and reviled like you by their former companions, *might* henceforth *live* a truly spiritual and divine life *a*. So he goes on to remind Christians, that there will quickly be *an end to all* the vain pleasures and concerns of the present life; and that *therefore they should be sober and watch unto prayer. And above all things,* adds he, be careful to maintain *fervent love to one another; for love will cover a multitude of sins:* it will induce you to find out the best excuse you can for the sins of others, and will encourage a cheerful hope in your breasts, that through the mercy of God you shall obtain forgiveness for your own numberless errors and failings. And thus is the admonition in our text introduced—*Use hospitality*

a There is a considerable difficulty in determining the true sense of this passage. Some have supposed, that by *them that are dead* the apostle means such Christians as then suffered martyrdom in the cause of religion; and that the sense is, "the gospel brought good tidings to them, for it assured them that however their bodies were condemned by men to death, their immortal spirits should live together with God in heaven." Some render the words thus, "To this purpose the gospel was preached to them that are dead in sin, that they who are according to men in the flesh, that is, live a sensual life, may be condemned; and they who live according to God in the spirit, that is, a holy life, may live, that is, be finally saved." Some think there is a reference here to ch. iii. 19. and understand the apostle to speak of antediluvian sinners, hereon founding an opinion respecting the salvation of some of them.

See WOLF. *Curæ Philolog.* DOD. *in loc.* &c.

one to another, without grudging. As if he had said, "Though we wish to confirm you in your just abhorrence of the intemperate mirth and jollity of wicked men, we do not mean that you should be morose, gloomy, and selfish. No. Enjoy the good which Providence has bestowed upon you, and be generous and hospitable to one another."

Use hospitality, or, be ye hospitable, that is, *be ye lovers of strangers a:* be well disposed to them, receive them into your houses, entertain them there, shew them all the kindness in your power. As strangers the apostle had described those to whom he addresses this epistle, in the first verse of the first chapter: and that was the proper description of the Jews scattered through the Roman provinces; they were strangers in regard of Judea, their own proper country. But that is not the idea here intended: the original word taken by itself means strangers in general, those who are such as not being of our house, or among the number of our domestics. A particular regard, indeed, the apostle might have to travellers, persons who came from remote countries; and especially those who were sent out by the churches to preach the gospel. But it is evident his views are extended further, for he adds, *Use hospitality to one another.* It is to be reciprocal among Christians, so far as their ability will admit. And it is to be practised *without grudging*, without *grumbling b*; in the most easy, cheerful, and cordial manner.—Now in order to set this subject of *Hospitality* in its proper light, we must consider more particularly,

FIRST, Of whom it is required:

SECONDLY, To whom it is to be practised:

THIRDLY, The duty itself: and,

FOURTHLY, Our obligations to it.

FIRST, Let us enquire *of whom* this duty of Hospitality is required.

To this it is replied that the *principle* is required of all, but the duty itself of those only whose circumstances will admit of it. Hospitality is a species of charity to which every one is not competent. But the temper from which it proceeds, I mean a humane, benevolent, generous temper; that ought to

a Φιλόξενοι. b Ανευ γογγυσμου.

prevail in every breast. The opposite of it, a private, selfish, avaricious disposition, is most detestable. No one in whom it predominates can be a Christian: indeed he who is of this character is not worthy of the name of a man. Where there is a propensity to covetousness, (and in some there is naturally a stronger propensity to it than in others) reason and religion teach that every possible endeavour should be used to overcome it. And if men would but sit down and consider, how contemptible this vice renders them in the eye both of God and man, how effectually it defeats all those noble objects of general good which ought to occupy the human mind, what a sure source it is of anxiety and wretchedness to him in whose breast it prevails, and the absolute uncertainty both of the acquisition and continuance of worldly wealth; if men, I say, would duly consider these things, methinks the tyranny of this accursed demon in their breasts would be shook, if not totally subdued. But it is beyond the power of general reasonings and persuasions, to extricate the abject slave to this vice from his chains. The grace of God, however, will ennoble the sordid mind, raise the affections from low and grovelling pursuits, and convert a base and selfish into an open and generous spirit. The arguments which the gospel proposes to this end, are admirably adapted to convince the judgment and move the heart. What man who believes that the Son of God from pure motives of compassion assumed human nature, and suffered the vilest death, to save him from the greatest miseries, can possibly have a hard, contracted, unfeeling heart! Entering into the spirit of this divine truth, and having his infinitely benevolent Saviour in full view before his eyes, his bosom must needs catch fire, his whole soul dilate, and his wide-extended arms embrace all his brethren of mankind. Such is the real character of a genuine Christian. And a man of this character, if he has it in his power, will be hospitable.

But *ability* is the principal question to be discussed here. Some are miserably poor, and it is not to be expected that their doors should be thrown open to entertain strangers. Yet the cottage of a peasant may exhibit noble specimens of hospitality. Here distress has often met with pity, and the persecuted an asylum. Nor is there a man who has a house to sleep

in, but may be benevolent to strangers. But the particular expressions of liberality required of us are to be regulated by our circumstances, of which we shall hereafter more largely speak. In the mean time, as it is the wish of every good man to have it in his power to fall in with the admonition in our text; it may be of use to dwell a few moments on two virtues, of the last importance to be cultivated to that end: I mean *Industry* and *Economy*.

Self-indulgence is the bane of charity, it contracts the soul, and makes it insensible to the noble feelings of generous love. And sloth, the usual attendant of self-indulgence, though it may not instantly consume a man's property; yet prevents the improvement of it, and thereby precludes him from the ability of gratifying a social disposition. Self-indulgence and sloth, therefore, should be carefully guarded against. Cherish in your breasts, Christians, love to others. Be happy in the idea of their happiness, and especially in that of being yourselves the instruments of promoting it. This god-like temper will rouse you from the soft slumbers of ignominious indolence, and prompt you to exertions that will quickly put it in your power, with the blessing of God, to be at once hospitable and happy. The man who is urged to diligence by a generous spirit, is more likely to succeed in his affairs, than the wretch whose object is to hoard up what he gets, or at best to consume it upon himself. His generosity will give vigour to his faculties, add spirit to his exertions, and secure him the favour of all ingenuous people he has to do with. And as his affairs prosper, so his object, the gratification of this noble passion for doing good, will be attained: his friends will share the smiling fruits of his hospitality, and he feel a greater pleasure in communicating than they in receiving them. For *it is more blessed*, as our Saviour says, *to give than to receive* [a].—Aquila was a diligent man, he wrought hard at the occupation of tent-making, God succeeded his labours, and he had the joy of entertaining a Paul and an Apollos, and many other excellent people in his house.

But, in order to our acquiring an ability to be hospitable, it is necessary that we should be *prudent* as well as industrious.

a Acts xx. 35.

Extravagance is very nearly as inimical to this duty as sloth: *this* prevents our obtaining the means of generosity, *that* deprives us of them as soon as we possess them. Economy, therefore, is to be strictly regarded. How the line is to be drawn between profusion and parsimony, in the entertainments we make for our friends, may be shewn hereafter. But this is not the only thing, economy is to be observed in the management of all our affairs. No idle unmeaning expence is to be incurred by any branch of the family. Waste is on no account to be connived at under the notion of plenty. The servants are to be narrowly watched, the daughters to be bred up to housewifery, and the prudent eye of the mistress to pervade through every department of her house. From such an unremitting attention to domestic concerns very great advantage will result to the interests of hospitality. The saving of this or that expence upon ourselves, and the ingenuously managing this or that entertainment, so that it shall be plentiful and yet not costly; will enable us to receive more strangers into our house than we otherwise could.—Priscilla we may be sure was as prudent as her husband Aquila was industrious: for otherwise they could not have been so hospitable, as it appears from Scripture history they were. But, without referring particularly to characters of this sort, such as Abigail, Dorcas, and the like; it shall suffice to recommend the diligent study of the character of the virtuous woman in the Proverbs, in order to inspire mistresses of families with economy, and to teach them its importance to the object before us.

Of all those who have ability this duty is required. But there are persons of certain characters and stations in life who are more especially obliged to it: as particularly magistrates and others in civil offices, who would forfeit the esteem of the public, and greatly injure their usefulness, were they not to observe the rites of hospitality. But those whom the apostle seems to have chiefly in his eye are ministers, and such private Christians as are qualified by their particular offices in the church, and their affluent circumstances, to be eminently useful in this way. As to the former, it is a qualification expressly required of a Christian bishop, that he be *given to hospitality* [a].

[a] 1 Tim. iii. 2.

No man ought to take upon him this office who is not of this disposition: for with what an ill grace would he enjoin that upon others to which he is himself totally averse! And occasions for the exercise of this species of liberality are not infrequent, as their houses are often on many accounts visited by persons of every rank among their flock. What pity but they were all in a capacity to gratify so humane and benevolent a temper! Their being *given to hospitality* evidently supposes them to possess at least a competency of the things of this life. And since the duties of their office do not allow them the same opportunities with others of improving their circumstances, it is highly incumbent on their people to put it in their power to comply with the apostolic admonition. Indeed, he who tells bishops that they should be *given to hospitality*, does in effect charge it upon those they serve, to enable them to be hospitable. What Christian of a generous mind but must feel pain to see the table of his minister, through the narrowness of his circumstances, so parsimoniously spread as not to admit a stranger to it?

They, too, who are called to offices in the church, which imply affluence in those who hold them, ought to excel in hospitality. Deacons are *to serve tables a*—the table of Christ, of the minister, and of the poor. And thus employed about the tables of others, it is but fit that they should have a table of their own. Indeed this is the duty of all whom Providence has prospered, and who have zeal for religion, especially those whose situation is peculiarly favourable for the reception of pious strangers, who cannot otherwise be provided for. A great deal of this hospitality there was in the primitive times, when a multitude of itinerant preachers were sent out by the churches, to propagate the gospel through the Roman provinces. And in the epistles not a few venerable names are recorded of persons who, like Gaius, *received the brethren and strangers into their houses, and brought them forward on their journey after a godly sort b.*

SECONDLY, Our next enquiry is, *To whom* this duty is to be practised?

The word *Hospitality* signifies, as we have observed already, the shewing *kindness to strangers*. Now the term *Strangers*

a Acts vi. 2. b 3 John 5—8.

hath two acceptations. It is to be understood of travellers, or persons who come from a distance, and with whom we have little or no acquaintance; and more generally, of all who are not of our house—*strangers* as opposed to *domestics*.

With respect to the first of these. In early times mankind lived after a different manner from what they do now. Some indeed dwelt in cities, cultivated the arts, and soon losing sight of hospitality degenerated into all the meanness of ceremony, and the effeminacy of luxury. But the patriarchs, following the occupation of shepherds, and by the command of God wandering about from place to place, without possessing any territory they could call their own; were by these local circumstances, as well as their own pious dispositions, accustomed to shew very particular regard to strangers. It could not but be an agreeable thing to people who thus led a solitary, rural life, to receive a traveller into their tents, and make him happy in every way they were able. So the apostle speaks of the patriarchs as being used *to entertain strangers, and thereby sometimes entertaining angels unawares a.* And thus it is in most countries. The more distantly families are situated from places of public concourse, the more are they disposed to be hospitable to those whom they never saw before; considering the pleasure they receive from such temporary visits, as an equivalent for all the kindness they shew their guests. As therefore families thus situated are particularly obliged to this duty, so all strangers, from the peculiarity of their circumstances, have a right to expect of such families more or less regards in this way. But in a populous country, where the accommodations of life are every where to be met with, we are by no means required indiscriminately to receive all strangers into our houses. Attention should be paid to the character, recommendation, and necessities of those who wish to be entertained. Through a neglect of this, the good-nature of some pious worthy people has been shamefully imposed upon, and their neighbours too injured by their credulity. And hence we find, in the early age of the Christian church, persons who were sent abroad carried with them letters of credence, which procured admission for them into the houses of the brethren whom they had never seen before *b*.

a Heb. xiii. 2. *b* Rom. xvi. 1.—2 Cor. iii. 1,—&c.

But the term *stranger* here is to be understood more generally as opposed to *domestics*. We are to use hospitality to those who are not of our own house. And the apostle by making the duty mutual (for he says, *Use hospitality one to another*) evidently means to include among the guests we receive those who can entertain us again, as well as those who have it not in their power to make any return. Let us begin with those of the latter description.

1. Hospitality is a duty to be practised to *the poor*.

They who have no houses of their own, or however few of the conveniencies of life, should occasionally be invited to our houses, and refreshed at our tables. *When thou makest a feast*, says our Lord, *call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompence thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just* [a]. I scarce need observe here, that few people are so circumstanced, as to be able to entertain all the poor of their neighbourhood at their tables. Be that however as it may, the idle dissolute poor have no right to expect such favour of us. And of those we do think fit to invite, particular regard should be paid to their characters and necessities. And with respect to these, at least some of them, more effectual service may be done them, and with greater content both to them and ourselves, by putting it in their power to furnish their own tables, or by sending them a portion from ours. The particular circumstances of families are no doubt to direct in these matters. Some, however, may be so situated as that convenience will admit of their having now and then a company of virtuous poor people about them; and their own natural cast may be such as to render these little festivities highly agreeable and improving. But I suppose there are no truly pious people who do not take a pleasure in entertaining, at certain seasons, some of their poor fellow-Christians who are particularly dear to them. All cannot be invited, such therefore will be selected as have a principal claim on their regards: and the associating with them in a free, cheerful, and familiar manner, will have a happy effect to unite their hearts to us, and to add force to the counsels and admonitions we give them. It has been supposed by some that the primitive Chris-

[a] Luke xiv. 13, 14.

tians, impressed with this idea, were used to have what they called *feasts of charity a* in the public meetings of the church; but these feasts being abused the apostle Paul abolished them *b*. However this was, there can be no doubt that we are to pity the poor, to counsel them, and assist them; and this mode of doing it, I mean the entertaining them at our own houses, if it can be adopted with convenience, may answer very useful purposes to them and to ourselves. But if any judge it more prudent to help them in another way, they should not suffer the disagreeable imputation of paying no attention to the rites of hospitality.

2. Hospitality is to be practised, not to the poor only, but to *persons of a different description*. Use hospitality, says our text, *one to another*. Here give me leave to speak of those guests we are obliged in duty occasionally to entertain, and of those whom prudence and piety teach us to select from among our acquaintance as more frequent and stated visitors.

Every man has no doubt a right to invite whom he pleases to his house. But Christian people owe particular obligations to those who are of the same character, and especially of the same religious society with themselves. It would be strange, for instance, if their ministers were to be held at a distance from their houses, or never to be admitted there without coldness and reserve. Indeed the respect which prudent ministers owe to their own character, will secure them from the indecent abuse of that hospitality to which they are peculiarly entitled. As they have neither leisure nor inclination to be perpetually feasting at the houses of their people, so they will be cautious of giving the most distant occasion to an imputation of fondness for such convivial intercourses. But it is impossible we should feel that attachment to them which is the natural result of our being profited by their labours, and not give them a hearty welcome to our habitations. The members too of the same community, when occasion requires, may naturally expect a share in our hospitality in preference to others. The cultivating a friendly correspondence with them, will have a good effect to promote the interest of religion among us.

But it may be proper more particularly to describe the characters of those, whom we should receive and entertain as our in-

a Jude 12. *b* See 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22, 34.

timate friends and companions. Our honour and happiness depend much upon the prudent choice we make. As to relations, our doors no doubt should be open to them, as also to people with whom we are connected in business. But with respect to the latter it should be observed, that the idea of extending their trade has proved a temptation to many, especially young people, to make more free with their time and their substance in this way than is convenient. A decent respect should be paid to all we are concerned with; but the people we receive into our bosoms, and with whom visits are frequently exchanged, should have higher and nobler claims on our regard than those of worldly interest. Their good-sense, knowledge, virtue, and above all genuine piety, should be the principal allurements to an intimacy with them. A few select friends of this description, with whom we may be perfectly free, and who prefer plainness, plenty, and cordiality to all the splendour and luxury of the great; are the persons who should partake chiefly of our hospitality. To them our houses should be their home, and their houses in return will be our home. Intimacies thus formed, and not carried beyond the bounds our circumstances will admit of, will contribute largely to our reputation, improvement, and happiness. But a contrary conduct, under the notion of extraordinary generosity, has proved the ruin of many families; and ought to be particularly guarded against in this age of miserable dissipation and folly.

We should now proceed to the main thing, which is to consider the rites of hospitality, or the kind of entertainment we are to give those whom we invite to our houses. But this, together with our obligations to these duties, we must refer to the next sermon; and close what has now been said with a few words of advice, to those who are required in our text to use hospitality, and those who enjoy the fruits of it.

As to the former. Be thankful, my friends, to God who hath given you ability and hearts to be hospitable. To him you owe your substance, houses, families, servants, leisure, and all your opportunities of shewing kindness to others in this pleasing way. He is your Master, and to him you are accountable as stewards for the bounty with which he has entrusted you. Be prudent in the management of your concerns. Remember

the character the psalmist gives of a good man: *he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous: he sheweth favour and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion* a. Take heed that generosity does not precipitate you into extravagance. Do not affect splendour, and be cautious how you aspire to an equality with those whom Providence has placed in a superior rank to yourselves. This is a vanity to which mankind are very prone, and, if it be indulged, will not only displease God, but lessen you in the opinion of all wise and discerning people. Be courteous in your manner of conferring favours, and be particularly careful you give not those you entertain the pain of supposing you mean to lay them under obligations to you. Let their pleasantly accepting the kindness be in your apprehension a discharge of the obligation. Spend not too much time in receiving and returning visits: remember, business and pleasure, exertion and relaxation, are constantly to succeed each other. Let your hospitality be seasoned with piety, gratitude to your great benefactor, and a care not to abuse the fruits of his bounty. And, in a word, let your hours of entertainment receive additional pleasure from their being consecrated to knowledge, virtue, and religion.

And you who are entertained at the houses of your friends, suffer a word of exhortation. If your circumstances will not admit of your making an adequate return, be not ashamed to acknowledge the obligation. *To crouch to another for a morsel of bread* b, is a meanness to which no man of spirit can submit: but the same greatness of mind which shews itself in an easy delicate manner of bestowing a favour, will shew itself also in a pleasant grateful manner of accepting it. A haughty, stubborn, sullen kind of insensibility argues want of understanding, as well as of good-nature and piety. Beware of pride and ingratitude. Indulge not the fond notion that your merit fully entitles you to every token of respect and kindness you receive. Watch against an encroaching imposing temper. And if poverty deprives you of the means of hospitality, let it not however deprive you of the noble generous spirit whence it flows.—But, if you have it in your power to requite obligations of this sort, need I exhort you rather to excess than parsimony? That temper which

a Psal. cxii. 4, 5. b I Sam. ii. 36.

will allow a man to obtrude himself on the hospitality of his friends, but creates coldness and reserve at the idea of his returning the favour, is despicable beyond expression. And indeed the notion of being precisely on even terms with others, is unworthy of an ingenuous mind. But we will not anticipate our subject. *Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.*

PART II.

HAVING shewn *of whom* the duties of Hospitality are required, and *to whom* they are to be practised, we proceed,

THIRDLY, To consider *the various offices* of Hospitality, and *the manner* in which they should be rendered.

It is not my business to enumerate particularly the favours which a generous host will confer on his guests: it is enough to observe that he will make them as happy as he can during their stay under his roof. Three things, however, are to be remarked concerning these entertainments, namely, that they should be *plentiful—frugal*—and *cordial*; regard being always had to our own rank and circumstances, and to their quality and condition in life whom we entertain.

1. *Plenty.*

This is an idea intimately connected with Hospitality. Whomsoever we invite to our tables, whether the poor, our equals, or our superiors, there should be a sufficiency, yea more than a sufficiency. Better not invite our friends at all than suffer them to go away hungry, or out of humour with their entertainment. Hospitable people will deny themselves this and that gratification rather than their guests. They will be content to sit down to many a spare repast when alone, rather than suffer parsimony to disgrace their table, when their friends do them the honour to surround it. A suspicion that any one feels himself unhappy will give them painful anxiety, and utterly deprive them of that pleasure which is the proper reward of hospitality. Let plenty then cover our tables on these occasions. Let the food be wholesome, if not delicate; let it be served up with neatness, though without splendour; and if there is not variety, let there however be no complaint of scarcity. When three strangers visit the tent of Abraham, Sarah makes cakes of three measures of fine meal, and the servant fetches a calf

tender and good, and dresses it *a*. A large bill of fare is given us of the provisions with which the table of that public-spirited governor of Jerusalem, Nehemiah, was daily spread, at his own private expence *b*. *In my father's house*, says the prodigal, recollecting the smiling plenty that abounded in that hospitable mansion, *there is bread enough and to spare c*. And our Lord having generously entertained thousands of people in the wilderness, when they had all eaten and were filled, we are told, there remained twelve baskets of fragments *d*.

Frugality should however be observed in all our entertainments.

The ingenuity with which it hath pleased God to endow the female sex, hath enabled some of them to acquire great honour by their prudent management in these matters. Their natural good sense, assisted by the advantage of a happy domestic education, has taught them how to treat their friends respectfully and cordially too at a moderate expence. Frugality is not inconsistent with plenty. There may be enough and to spare, without such an unreasonable abundance as rather disgusts than pleases. Nor is economy unfriendly to that neatness and decorum, which are always considered as qualities that add grace to an entertainment. Awkwardness, as well as extravagance, usually accompanies superfluity; and what in such case is meant as a kindness, becomes an occasion not only of waste but of confusion. A proper medium, therefore, observed between luxury and parsimony, contributes as much to the satisfaction of the guest as the emolument of the host. And however the respect due to the persons we invite to our tables, may on some occasions require an extraordinary attention to variety and elegance, yet economy in these cases is not to be overlooked. A kind of splendour that is beyond our circumstances, will give pain to our superiors instead of pleasure, and will not fail to be set down to the account of vanity rather than respect. With prudent management there may be variety and elegance too without extravagance, and matters may be so arranged that a sensible observer may see our motive is, not a wish to gratify our ambition, but to do him honour.

Some people, indeed, betray a littleness of mind (on occasions when peculiar regard should be shewn a friend) that re-

a Gen. xviii. 6—8. *b* Neh. v. 18. *c* Luke xv. 17. *d* Luke ix. 17.

flects great disgrace upon their characters. Of this cast were they who found fault with that exuberance of love, which one of the Marys expressed for our Saviour, when at an entertainment *she took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed his feet* a. Nor was their affectation of economy and regard to the poor, capable of disguising that worse than littleness of mind, that cruel avarice which drew from them such illiberal treatment of this pious woman. The veil was too thin not to be seen through, especially by an all-seeing eye. *Let her alone*, says our Lord, *the poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always* b. We mean not, therefore, by recommending frugality to check the natural and well-directed efforts of pure benevolence and love. Yet surely, whilst we hold avarice in sovereign contempt, and on some extraordinary occasions may be justified in going to the utmost length our ability will allow; we must admit economy is a virtue, and a virtue too that claims kindred with charity. Our Saviour was beneficent in the highest degree: yet, having entertained five thousand people in the most plentiful manner, he does not think it beneath him to give particular charge to his disciples to gather up the fragments, that there might be no waste.—But,

3. *Cordiality* is the main thing.

At whatever expence we receive and entertain our guests, if we do not give them a hearty welcome, we come not within the description of the text; *Use hospitality without grudging.* The doing any duty merely from secular motives, or at most to satisfy the pressing dictates of conscience, is not acting up to the character of genuine Christians. Our religion teaches and enjoins sincerity and cheerfulness in the whole of our obedience. A kindness to a fellow-creature extorted from us by necessity, can neither be grateful to him nor acceptable to God. Be they who they will we invite to our houses, whether poor or rich, if they conceive a notion that we do not like their company, either through prejudice against their persons, or considerations of avarice, they must needs be unhappy: and to make our visitors happy is essential to the idea of hospitality. Besides, the want of freedom and cordiality must produce as painful an effect in our own minds as in theirs. It is true, indeed, we cannot be sup-

a John xii. 3. b John xii. 7, 8.

posed to have the like affectionate regard for all we entertain: some may, strictly speaking, be strangers, or only on the footing of general acquaintance. But, for the most part, the people we ask to our tables will be such as we esteem and love: and to them surely we shall give a hearty welcome. Nor will it scarce consist with sincerity and good-nature, to treat those of the former description with coldness and reserve.

Use hospitality then *without grudging*. Having made up your mind to your duty, that is, being of a generous disposition, and having well settled it with yourself whom you will entertain, and what entertainment your circumstances will allow you to make; invite your friends in the most cordial manner, give them a hearty welcome at their entrance, and let your table, your countenance, your discourse, and your whole behaviour shew, that their company affords you satisfaction and joy. The rites of hospitality thus performed, all the ends proposed thereby will be answered to both parties; your guests will go away delighted with the reception they have met with, and you possessed of a pleasure which is the natural and adequate reward of domestic generosity. It is more easy to imagine than describe the cordiality with which Lazarus and his two sisters were used to receive their friends at Bethany, especially our Lord Jesus Christ; and there can be no doubt that their generosity met with its reward.

But there are other matters we have to recommend to hospitable people, in order to their making their company and themselves happy. The improvement of the mind, as well as the satisfying the appetites of nature, should be our object: and it is with good reason expected, that he who entertains should guide the discourse as well as do the honours of the table. To subjects that may both please and profit we should aim to direct the attention of our friends, and lead on the talk with an ease and familiarity that may induce all present to take a part in the conversation. Good-sense and piety properly mingled are of admirable use on these occasions. Adapting ourselves to the characters and taste of our company, and taking advantage of little circumstances that arise, how happy may we make them!—provide food for their immortal minds while we are refreshing their animal spirits! Our Saviour has happily taught us, by his own

example, how to make the familiar intercourses of the table turn to a valuable account. But of this we may have occasion to speak hereafter.—I shall only add, that the acknowledging the bounty of Heaven, in the presence of our guests, with all becoming seriousness and gratitude, is a duty intimately connected with the rites of hospitality. The neglect of this is not only an affront to God, our great benefactor, but an injury to our friends and ourselves. We shall not however enlarge here, as this subject has been fully discussed elsewhere *a*.—Let us go on now,

FOURTHLY, and lastly, To consider our *Obligations* to this duty of Hospitality.—And here we shall begin,

1. With the *fitness and reasonableness* of the duty.

Man was made for society. Domestic connections are the first to which nature directs us. But as individuals cannot subsist of themselves, so neither can families. The members of which different houses are composed, will have frequent occasion to meet together in places common to them all; such as at market, in courts of justice, and in houses devoted to the worship of God. But these associations are not sufficient to answer all the purposes of society. Their mutual protection, assistance, and comfort make it necessary for particular families at certain seasons to meet together at one another's houses. Many if not the principal offices of humanity, friendship, and religion must be foregone, if the doors of each separate habitation are to be opened to none but those who reside in it. As therefore intercourse between families is necessary, hospitality to strangers, that is, to those who are not of our own house, is, upon the general grounds of convenience and benevolence, most fit and reasonable. If business brings a person to my house with whom I have no particular friendship or acquaintance, he certainly ought to be treated civilly and kindly: common decency teaches this. If distress brings strangers to my house, and it be more necessary for them and more convenient for me to admit them under my roof, than to dismiss them with alms; the reception I give them should surely be humane and hospitable. And the thing plainly speaks for itself, that where kindred and friendship have united families, the houses of such families should be open to

a DISC. III.

each other, and their mutual entertainments free, cordial, and generous.

2. Hospitality brings with it its own *Reward.*

Our Saviour tells us, *It is more blessed to give than to receive* [a]: and I appeal to the feelings of every humane and generous breast whether it is not so. If Providence has put it in our power to do good, a ready compliance with the will of Providence is the direct means to procure happiness to ourselves. While we are giving pleasure to others, we are adding to our own stock of pleasure. There is indeed a kind of hospitality, falsely so called, which is not the effect of pure love and benevolence, but of a passion for splendour and ostentation: and it must be owned, the pleasure resulting from such hospitality is at best mean, trifling, and precarious. But true hospitality, which is the fruit of genuine humanity and friendship, cannot fail of exciting most agreeable sensations in his breast who is accustomed to it. How happy must I feel myself, while relieving the anxieties and mitigating the sorrows of those to whom I bear a cordial good will! And how happy, too, while cheerfully sharing the comforts of life with those whom I highly esteem and dearly love! This joy, as it is rational and manly, so is far greater and more enlivening than that of the wretch who eats his morsel alone, pleasing himself with the miserable idea that the wealth he possesses has accumulated from parsimony, and that he hath grown rich on the spoils of humanity. Would you then sink into contempt among all around you, give existence to a thousand occasions of anxiety and distress, and suffer your miserable mansion to be haunted with the most horrid spectres imagination can create?—then, drive the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger from your gates, shut your door against every relation and acquaintance you have, bid defiance to friendship, sacrifice at the shrine of Mammon all the feelings of humanity, and beneath your treasures bury your wretched self. On the contrary, would you secure to yourself the esteem of good men, the prayers of the poor, and the affections of your relations and acquaintance? Would you gratify the noblest passion of the human breast, diffuse cheerfulness through your dwelling, draw down the blessing of God upon you, and lay up

a Acts xx. 35.

treasure for yourself in heaven?—then, *Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.*

3. This duty is expressly *commanded by God.*

Numerous are the passages both in the Old and New Testament, wherein hospitality is strictly enjoined upon us, and enforced by a great variety of motives. We cannot recite them all here. Moses again and again with great earnestness admonishes the Israelites to be benevolent to the poor, the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the Levite; to receive them into their houses, to eat and drink with them, and to rejoice in all the good that God had bestowed on them. He exhorts them to be free, cheerful, and cordial in the discharge of this duty; beseeching them to beware lest an avaricious, grudging, hard-hearted thought should at any time arise in their breasts. He reminds them to this end of the deplorable condition they were themselves once in, when strangers and bond-slaves in Egypt; and makes the Levites' having no inheritance among them a reason why they should be particularly hospitable to them. He insists that this duty was peremptorily required of them by God, that an attention to it would be highly pleasing to him, and that so doing, they might be assured the Lord their God would bless them in all the works of their hands *a*. The prophets too in numberless instances urge this duty upon the Jews, and for their failure therein denounce the judgments of God upon them.

In the New Testament, besides the many passages wherein benevolence is enjoined, which includes in it hospitality, there are not a few directly to our purpose. Our Saviour frequently inculcates it in his parables, as particularly in that of Dives and Lazarus, and that of the good Samaritan *b*. *When thou makest a feast*, says he in another place, *call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just c.* When he sends his apostles to preach the gospel, unprovided with money for their journey, he assures them there would be those who would hospitably receive them into their houses; and on such houses he pronounces a blessing,

a See Lev. xxv. 35—38.—Deut. xiv. 26—29. xv. 7—11, &c. &c.
b Luke xvi. 19—ult. x. 30—37. *c* Luke xiv. 13, 14.

saying, 'He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward *a*.' And in his striking description of the last judgment, the hospitality of the righteous to strangers is particularly mentioned to their honour; while the wicked are upbraided with the contrary conduct to their eternal confusion *b*. Exhortations to this duty frequently occur in the epistles. To the Romans the apostle says, 'Distribute to the necessities of the saints, and be given to hospitality *c*.' To the Hebrews, 'Let brotherly love continue, and be not forgetful to entertain strangers *d*.' This he mentions as a qualification of a Christian bishop, telling us that he should be 'given to hospitality *e*,' and 'a lover of hospitality and of good men *f*.' And the widows, whom he would have particularly honoured and regarded by the church, he describes as 'having lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work *g*.' In fine, the will of God in this matter could not be more fully and strongly expressed than in our text, *Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.*—From these commands of God let us proceed,

4. To consider some striking *examples* of hospitality on divine record.

This virtue, so friendly to society, prevailed much in the patriarchal age. Nor could a more perfect and pleasing idea be given us of the plain, hearty, unsuspicious benevolence of those days than that we meet with in the stories of Abraham, Lot, Job, and others. To those men of God the apostle refers, when he tells us, that 'some by entertaining strangers, have entertained angels unawares *h*.' Abraham, seeing three persons at a distance whom he took to be men, ran to meet them; and according to his usual manner most respectfully saluted them, and with the greatest cordiality besought them to accept some re-

a Matt. x. 7—15. v. 41, 42. *b* Matt. xxv. 35, 43.
c Rom. xii. 13. *d* Heb. xiii. 1, 2. *e* 1 Tim. iii. 2.
f Tit. i. 8. *g* 1 Tim. v. 10. *h* Heb. xiii. 2.

freshment at his tent as they passed on their way. "I pray you, says he, not to go on your journey without making me happy by a visit. Let a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." So he hastens into the tent to Sarah, and desires her to get ready the best cakes she could make; while he ran to the herd and got a calf tender and good, which he delivered to the servant to dress it. The dinner, served up with butter and milk, he sets before his guests; and giving them a most hearty welcome, stands by them under the tree while they ate *a*. Such was the manner of those days of simplicity and good-nature. And what ample reward the generous old patriarch met with for his hospitality, you need not be told. The like entertainment two angels received from his kinsman Lot, who were sent to rescue him from the tremendous judgments, which the brutality of his incestuous neighbours drew down upon their guilty heads *b*. What pleasure the patriarch Job also took in rendering such offices of kindness not only to his friends and relatives, but to the poor and helpless, may be easily imagined from the appeal he makes to God upon this matter in the time of his adversity. 'If I have eaten,' says he, 'my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof: if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering: if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep: if I have lift up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let my arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone *c*.' And however his faith was tried, by being deprived for a time of the means of gratifying this his hospitable disposition, he was quickly restored to a state of affluence, which enabled him to be more kind to the poor, and more generous to his friends than ever *d*.

a Gen. xviii. 1—8. *b* Gen. xix. 1—3. *c* Job xxxi. 17—22.

d The character Homer gives Axylus, who was slain by Diomede, very well agrees with what is related in Scripture of the ancient patriarchs, and their sitting at their gates to invite strangers into their houses.

Αξυλος, ὁ ἄρ' ἐνοιφι ἑοῖν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης,
Τευθρανίδην, ὃς ἔναιεν ἐυκτιμένῃ ἐν Ἀρίσβῃ,
Ἀφνειὸς βιότοιο, φίλος δ' ἦν ἀνθρώποισι·
Πανδοκὸς γὰρ φίλεεσκεν, ὅθι οἱ πάντες ἔνειαν. ΙΛ. Ζ.

Virtue never strikes us so strongly, as when exhibited to our view in the character of persons who fill a low station of life; and no one can fail of being charmed with the artless and friendly hospitality he happens to meet with in the cot of a peasant. An instance of this sort we meet with in the book of Judges, which serves to relieve our minds of the pain we feel, from the sad story of the Levite and his concubine with which it is connected. As these two people with their servant were returning from the house of the father of this unhappy woman, they took up their lodging for a night in Gibeah of Benjamin. But so inhospitable were the inhabitants of that place, that they were obliged to sit them down in a street of the city, no man inviting them to his house. At length, however, a good old man comes from his work in the field, and seeing these strangers in the street, after asking them whence they came and whither they were going; invites them to his house, poor as he was, saying, *Peace be with you, let all your wants lie upon me.* So he gives provender to their asses, washes their feet, and with a hearty good-will makes them eat and drink *a.* Who can read this little story without wishing this poor man had possessed an estate in Gibeah, large enough to excuse him from manual labour, and enable him to gratify his benevolent disposition to the utmost extent of it?

The story likewise of the Shunamite must not be passed over in silence. She was indeed in a superior station to that of the good man just mentioned, but she had a heart as benevolent as his. When Elisha the prophet came that way she was used to invite him with great earnestness to her house, to *constrain him*, as it is expressed, *to eat bread.* And in the fulness of her heart we hear her saying to her husband, *Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be*

Next Teuthras's son distain'd the sands with blood,
Axylus, hospitable, rich and good:
In fair Arisba's walls (his native place)
He held his seat; a friend to human race.
Fast by the road, his ever-open door
Oblig'd the wealthy, and reliev'd the poor. POPE.

a Judges xix. 16—21.

when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither a. This was genuine hospitality, the fruit of benevolence and not of ostentation: for when the prophet on a time, sensible of his obligations to her for the care she had taken of him and his servant, asks her whether he should speak to the king or the captain of the host on her behalf; she replies with all the sweet tranquillity of unambitious contentment, a virtue nearly allied to that we are discoursing of, *I dwell among mine own people b.*

As to persons in a superior station of life, who were eminent both for their piety and their hospitality, many instances occur in the Old Testament; but it shall suffice to remind you of David, Obadiah, and Nehemiah. The first of these it is true was a mighty prince; his generosity however on occasion of his bringing up the ark to the tabernacle he had pitched for it, exceeded what might be expected even from royal munificence. *He dealt among all the people,* it is said, *even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine c.* Obadiah was ruler over the house of king Ahab, and by favouring the reformation which took place through the means of Elijah, hazarded every thing; yet such was his piety and hospitality, that *he took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water d.* Nehemiah was governor of the Jews on their return from the captivity twelve years; and during that time, so great was his benevolence that at his own private expence he kept open table for an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that visited him from among the heathens *e.*

To come now to the New Testament. What a good-natured and hospitable family was that of Lazarus at Bethany! And though Martha was perhaps too anxious about her domestic affairs, yet who can forbear applauding the benevolent regards she expressed for our Saviour and his friends *f*? The generous love of one of the Maries, who at a great expence procured an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and shook it over our Lord's head as he sat at meat; was so grateful to him that he declared, what she had done should be told for a memorial of

a 2 Kings iv. 8—10. *b* 2 Kings iv. 13. *c* 2 Sam. vi. 19.
d 1 Kings xviii. 4. *e* Neh. v. 17, 18. *f* Luke x. 38—ult.

her wherever the gospel should be preached in the whole world *a*. The primitive Christians were much given to hospitality. In the beginning they had all things in common: *they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and daily, breaking bread from house to house, they eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart b.* Wherever the gospel was received a liberal spirit was diffused among the people, and the houses as well as hearts of men in all places were open to entertain strangers who came properly recommended to them. In fine, the names of Priscilla and Aquila, of Lydia, of Gaius, and many others, will be conveyed down to the latest posterity with marks of divine approbation for their benevolence and hospitality.—But the most powerful argument to persuade us to the duty we are recommending, is that which results,

5. And lastly, from *divine Hospitality.*

The blessed God is the Father of a numerous family, the great Householder of the universe; and words are wanting to express the benevolence of his heart and the bounty of his hands. 'He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. All his works praise him, and his saints bless him. His creatures, every one of them, wait upon him, and he gives them their meat in due season. He openeth his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing *c*.' His sun shines and his rain falls on the evil as well as the good. His very enemies share of his bounty. He gives liberally to all men, and upbraids not. From him we receive ability to be hospitable, and hearts to be so too. The tables to which we invite our friends he spreads, and the cup we put into their hands he fills. Oh the munificence of the great God! How large, how constant, how inexhaustible is his bounty! Ought we not then to be followers of God as dear children? To be hospitable is to be like God: and to resemble his Maker is the glory of an intelligent creature.

But when we have surveyed the bounties of Providence in their largest extent, the idea we collect from thence of the generosity of the blessed God falls prodigiously short of that which the gospel inspires. Here, to use the language of an apostle, 'he hath shewn the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kind-

a Matt. xxvi. 6—13. *b* Acts ii. 45, 46. *c* Psal. cxlv. 9, 10, 15, 16.

ness towards us, through Christ Jesus *a*.' A feast he has prepared for myriads of guilty, wretched, helpless beings, at an expence which angels are at a loss to compute. The sacrifice is his own Son! How exquisitely grand must the feast on such a sacrifice be! Let eastern monarchs in all the pride of wealth and power, assemble their princes, nobles, and people, to partake of a banquet the most expensive and magnificent they can furnish. Let them on these occasions, like Ahasuerus, exhibit to the view of their subjects 'the riches of their glorious kingdoms, and the honour of their excellent majesty *b*.' It is all idle shew, a mere splendid nothing, when compared with this the noblest of all entertainments. Nor is the reception which the Master of this feast gives his numerous guests, less kind and gracious than the feast itself is sumptuous and delectable. With infinite condescension and goodness he sends his servants to invite men of all descriptions to it, with a cordiality not to be imagined he welcomes them to it, and with unexampled hospitality pours upon them a profusion of joys the most refined, substantial, and unutterable. Happy day, when all the guests shall be assembled, and this glorious festival shall be celebrated in the palace of the great King above!

Let us now lay all these ideas together—*the fitness* of this duty—*the reward* it brings with it—the fair *examples* of those who have most distinguished themselves by their generosity in this way—and, above all *the hospitality of the blessed God*, on whose favour our happiness depends; let us lay all these considerations together, and then ask ourselves, whether we can find it in our hearts to be selfish, parsimonious, and inhospitable? A man of this character is a wretch, a disgrace to his species, and deserving of the contempt and detestation of every rational and sociable being. Such monsters there may be in our world: but such, surely, are not to be found among the disciples of the kind, the benevolent, the hospitable Jesus. It is impossible that they who have shared of his bounty, and have drank into his spirit, should thrust the honest poor from their doors, shut up their bowels of compassion from the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger, and have no taste for the generous pleasures of friendship and society. We speak there-

a Eph. ii. 7. *b* Esth. i. 4.

fore, Christians, a language harmonious in your ears, and congenial to your hearts, when we say with the apostle, *Use hospitality one to another, without grudging.*

DISCOURSE XI.

CONVIVIAL INTERCOURSE.

JOB I. 4, 5.—*And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day, and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.*

FESTIVALS in families, on occasion of marriages, births, and other prosperous events, have been usual in most ages and countries. And it is not to be doubted that the practice is innocent and commendable. It is capable of being improved to ends the most salutary and important; and on the contrary, of being abused to purposes very criminal and pernicious. To offer such advice therefore as may prevent the evils apprehended, and contribute to the cheerfulness and utility of these domestic friendly associations, is the object of this discourse. The story just read naturally leads us to our design: the particulars of it therefore we shall consider and explain.

It has been questioned by some whether the story of Job is to be considered in any other light than a fable or allegory, after the manner of the easterns, and agreeable to some other parts of Scripture. But there does not appear to me ground sufficient to support this opinion. The story, exclusive of the discourse between the several parties, is short, told with a great air of simplicity, and an exactness of circumstances and names

scarce to be expected in mere apologue. But besides the internal marks of its being a true history, there are external ones which seem to me unanswerable; I mean, Ezekiel's mentioning Job in company with Noah and Daniel *a*, which it is hardly imaginable he would have done, if Job had not really existed as well as they; and the apostle James' referring to his history at the same time he does to that of Christ. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord b.*

As to the author, it is not certain who he was, whether Job himself, Elihu, or Moses. The latter seems most likely, as the name of Jehovah (by which God began to be known, or however chiefly known, in the time of Moses) is frequently used in the historical part of the book; whereas it is scarcely if at all mentioned in the discourses which make up the chief part of the book, and which are supposed to have been spoken, and indeed the whole matter to have happened, before the time of the author. But whoever the author was, the enquiry of the greatest consequence to the business before us is, at what time Job lived. Now it is plain it must have been before Moses's time, because the age of man was then reduced to what it is now, seventy or eighty; whereas Job we find lived one hundred and forty years. It was before sacrifices were confined to one altar, before the general apostacy of the nations, and when there was as yet no other idolatry but the worship of the sun and moon, and that was punished by the Judges *c*. It was while God was known more by the name of God Almighty than Jehovah, as was hinted before; and when divine knowledge was conveyed not by writing but by tradition, as seems probable from some passages in the course of the book *d*. In fine, it was evidently before the time of Moses, because no mention is made of the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, and no reference is had to any of the customs of that dispensation. I should suppose Job therefore to have lived in the patriarchal age; perhaps about the time of Isaac or Jacob: and very probably he was of the posterity of Nahor, Abraham's brother, whose first-born was Uz *e*.—It was then in an age of great simplicity of manners, but in which however idolatry *began* to prevail, and vice

a Ezek. xiv. 14. *b* James v. 11. *c* Chap. xxxi. 26, 28.
d Chap. viii. 8, 21, 25. *e* Gen. xxii. 20, 21.

to spread itself among the nations, that the scene of this history is to be placed.

Now the text tells us, That *the sons of Job went and feasted in their houses, every one his day, and sent and called for their three sisters, to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.*

Several things are here deserving our notice, some of which require a little explanation. As,

I. This *Festival* which was observed in the family of Job.

Our accounts of these early times are very short; so that we can frame but a very imperfect idea of matters of this sort. Human nature however being the same in every age, we may easily suppose that such customs in the general as now prevail in most countries, prevailed then; though with less art and more simplicity. Events that were memorable, interesting, and important would be apt to bring people together; and good-nature, an inclination to mirth, and a fondness for shew would be likely to put them on making entertainments for each other, expressive of their mutual joy and good-will. As to this festival, it does not seem to have been on a religious account; or of a very general and public kind. Only one family is mentioned, though it is true families were then very large, and others might be invited to the feast. The occasion it is probable was within themselves, either the birth or the marriage of some one of the house, or some prosperous event that had happened to them. But however that might be, it looks as if these feasts were periodical, or at stated seasons: and it is certain they were circular, for it is said they *feasted in their houses, every one his day.*

Now all this was innocent enough, yea, on some accounts very commendable. They might lawfully enjoy the comforts of life in a friendly, sociable, and cheerful manner. The remembrance of benefits received might justly excite joy, provided gratitude to God accompanied it. And it shewed an amiable disposition, and answered very valuable purposes, for a family

branched out as this was to meet thus together at certain seasons, and express their mutual love and concord. Here were seven sons, their children it is probable, and the sisters of the family also.

What kind of entertainments they made we cannot say. But it is likely they were as splendid as the simplicity of those times would allow; for their wealth was very great, and it is said, *they feasted*, and *they drank wine* [a]. It is further observable, that these banquets were repeated, they *went about from house to house, a day at a house:* and these days, it is probable, immediately succeeded each other; for that was much the custom of the easterns in after times. Perhaps they began at the house of the youngest, for it is remarkable they were at the eldest brother's when the last sad catastrophe befel them. And it is not improbable they were ambitious of out-doing each other on these occasions. So that upon the whole we may reasonably conclude, these feasts were very expensive, and their mirth and jollity very great.—Now though these family associations might, as I said, if properly managed, have been innocent, useful, and commendable; yet,

II. They unhappily became the *occasions* of sin.

Many circumstances concurred to render this the case. The company was large, seven sons, and three daughters, and their several children. And where companies are so numerous (though proper enough on such occasions) they are apt to get into parties, or else to grow too violent in their amusements.—They were also young, as may be gathered from the numerous family Job had after this first race was gone. They were in the bloom of age and the heat of blood: and at this time of life mirth and gaiety are peculiarly ensnaring. They were very rich, and so had all the means that can be well imagined of dissipation and pleasure: and were under no absolute necessity of cutting short their time of relaxation, and returning speedily to their labour.—Their father also was not with them. So grave and pious a man as he, had he been present, would no doubt have interposed his authority to restrain their excesses; while, at the same time, his prudence and good-nature would have led him to make his company as agreeable to them as possible.

[a] Ver. 13.

They however reasoned otherwise, chose he should be absent, as apprehending they would be more at liberty to gratify their lawless inclinations.—But the most unfavourable circumstance of all was, Satan's being among them. For it is quickly after said, when the Lord asked Satan, 'Whence comest thou?' that he answered, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.' He diligently watched his opportunity. And no fitter season than this could have offered, for his using all the art and influence he was master of to betray them into sin.—And accordingly, what through his address and their depraved appetites and passions,

III. They *actually* were betrayed into sin.

So I conclude both from Job's jealousies, and from the event. *He said, it may be my sons have sinned.* This jealousy of his might be groundless. But indulgent parents are not apt to suspect bad things of their children, till they are forced to it. He knew their complexion, and the power of temptation: knew perhaps some disagreeable things of them in time past, and had probably some hints given him of their behaviour, and so dreaded the consequence. Wherefore from his apprehensions, as he expresses them, I should suppose they really were guilty of some evil practices. And then the calamity that befel them confirms the idea. For though this providence was designed as a trial of Job's patience, yet it may be reasonably enough considered as a punishment of their sins, and not their sins in general only, but their excesses on this occasion. What Job therefore says of them in a way of suspicion, we may, I think, without the charge of uncharitableness, consider as real.

They sinned—eat and drank to excess, grew violent and outrageous in their mirth, and at length proceeded so far as *to curse God in their hearts.* They were *full and denied God, and said, Who is the Lord* [a]? From step to step they advanced, till they plunged themselves into the depths of iniquity.—They are cheerful—quickly they begin to think this their cheerfulness real enjoyment; they want no better heaven—so they secretly despise religion in their hearts—they drink—the wine goes merrily round—the fumes arise—they grow noisy and

[a] Prov. xxx. 9.

clamorous—what they thought before in their hearts, they now speak with their lips—the religion of the old man they make a joke of—and, lost to all sense of parental duty and esteem, no wonder, while they ridicule their father, they curse his God: no wonder they are ready for every abomination they have it in their power to commit. Charity would indeed lead one to hope the best concerning them. Yet if this was their temper and conduct, (and there seems too sad ground to apprehend it) surely the providence of God is abundantly justified in the sentence executed upon them.—But let us now turn our attention awhile,

IV. To their father's conduct.

When the days of their feasting were gone about, Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

From this account one would be apt to suspect Job of having been guilty of some neglect. He does well, now he understands there had been something amiss, to interpose between God and them. But ought he not to have prevented the evil? Was there no defect in their education, either in regard of *severity*, or *indulgence?* Some good men treat their children in early life with too great rigour, and so provoke them, when they become their own masters, to run into excesses they perhaps would not otherwise be guilty of. But in this case, if there was a mistake, it was probably on the side of indulgence: for there is a softness in his manner of speaking that looks much like the undue fondness of a parent—*It may be my sons have sinned:* just like good old Eli, *My sons, why do ye so a?* Or if there were no error in their education, and their ill conduct was entirely the effect of their own natural depravity and perverseness; yet was not Job to blame for not asserting his authority, and taking care to preside at these feasts, which he had reason to apprehend would prove occasions of mischief? His presence might have checked these excesses.—But perhaps he was not asked: or if he was, he had room to fear they would pay little regard to his rebukes.

a 1 Sam. ii. 23.

However this might be, whether his former behaviour towards them was or was not censurable, he certainly did right in thus piously expressing his concern for what had happened. Job was a good man; *he feared God and eschewed evil:* he could not therefore apprehend them to have affronted that great Being, and to have committed such daring outrages, without feeling inward anguish, and awfully dreading the consequence. The utmost he could now do was to use his interest with Heaven on their behalf. And this he does with all the fervour and piety of a man of God, and with all the tenderness and affection of an afflicted parent.—*He sent and sanctified them.* Sent perhaps a message to them, expressing his concern for what had passed, and wishing them to attend this seasonable and necessary act of devotion; or at least informing them what he was about.—And *sanctified* them, that is, prepared them, as far as lay in his power, for the approaching solemnity, both by directing them to the forms usual on these occasions, and by doing his utmost, as was just observed, to persuade them to a compliance with them. It is not indeed said they came. Perhaps they remained stubborn and incorrigible, adding to their former sins this further instance of contempt of the divine appointments. He however proceeds in what he had thus piously resolved on.

He rises early in the morning. Little sleep we may presume he had the night before, oppressed with anxious cares and it may be foreboding fears.—His sacrifices he prepares, one for each of the family; and offers them with great devotion, penitently confessing their sins and his own, and earnestly imploring the divine favour and forgiveness. What an affecting solemnity was this!—A venerable patriarch, the head of a numerous offspring, and by divine appointment king and priest in his own house, sacrificing to the Lord!—sacrificing upon an occasion the most interesting and important!—pouring the blood of his slain beasts on the altar!—and mingling with them his importunate cries and tears!—What tender emotions must his pious and compassionate heart have felt!—Zeal for the glory of God, and the most pungent grief for the follies and sins of his children, united to inspire his breast with all the fervour of real devotion. His faith, we have good reason to conclude, was directed to the Messiah, of whose sacrifice these he now offered were figures: and

blessings he doubtless obtained for himself, however his petitions might not be heard on behalf of his family.—And thus *Job did continually*: in this practice he persevered.—Let us now turn our eyes from the afflicted parent to his unhappy children, and see,

V. And lastly, what was the sad event of their continued disobedience and rebellion.

They went on rioting after their usual manner, unmoved by their father's rebukes, sacrifices, and prayers; till at length, 'being on a certain day in their eldest brother's house, eating and drinking wine, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon them, and they died *a*.' Providence had borne with them a long while: but now the day of recompense is come. They are in the midst of their jollity, perfectly secure, and making religion, as formerly, a part of their sport: when on a sudden the messenger of divine vengeance approaches, executes the just wrath of God upon them, and turns this scene of mirth, dissipation, and profaneness, into a scene of confusion, misery, and death. What a dreadful catastrophe this! They have not time given them so much as to apprehend their danger; no, not the warning that Belshazzar had of the handwriting against the wall *b*. They hear the wind—they see the house falling upon them—they feel the dreadful stroke—they are buried in the ruins. What becomes now of all their music and dancing, their mirth and laughter, their intemperance and profaneness? While the wine goes briskly round, death stands at their elbow unperceived, with a cup full of the wrath of God. He whom they had one minute cursed in their hearts, the next requires their souls at their hands. How awful the transition from these mansions of fancied bliss to the abodes of darkness! from all the madness and security of atheism to a full conviction that there is a God, and that under circumstances of the utmost horror and amazement!—*Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth c.*

Thus have we run over this short but striking and instructive story. And so our way is open to offer some advice respecting the management of domestic festivals. And how happy shall

a Ver. 18, 19. *b* Dan. v. 5, 6. *c* Psal. lviii. 11.

we be, if our advice may contribute to promote the innocent and useful purposes of these convivial meetings, and to prevent the evils of which they sometimes prove the unhappy occasion! But this we must refer to the next sermon, and close what has been said with two or three general reflections.

1. From this story it appears, that the best of men have sometimes very undutiful and dissolute children.

There can be no doubt but Job was a man of real and exalted piety; and it will scarcely admit of a question, all things considered, that his children were of the opposite character, vain, frivolous young people, void of the fear of God, and all concern about their best interests. Nor is this the only instance on divine record. Aaron, Eli, and David were miserably disappointed in the sanguine hopes they had formed of some, if not of all their children. Let not therefore parents so circumstanced be unduly discouraged. Your affliction is very great. Permit us to mingle our tears with yours, and to administer to you all the comfort in our power. It may be difficult to assuage your grief: yet allow us, in the softest language we can use, to remind you of the excellent men just referred to, and of their patience under these trying afflictions. Nor would we forget to caution you against a mistake, which hath sometimes greatly aggravated the distress of persons in your situation: I mean that of drawing an unfavourable conclusion from afflictions of this sort respecting their own state towards God. The instance in our text, and those just mentioned, are directly in point to the purpose of refuting this gloomy and totally groundless apprehension. No, my friends, it is an indisputable fact, that some of the best of men have had the worst of children. And as God cannot do wrong, so he means by these dispensations to try your faith and patience, and to convince you in the end, as he did Job, that *he is very pitiful and of tender mercy* [a]. But, in justice to the subject before us, we cannot forbear,

2. Reflecting a moment on some circumstances that contribute not a little to the misbehaviour of such children.

The seeds of depravity are deeply sown in our nature: and this no doubt is the grand source from whence all the extravagancies of young people originate. But then there are other

[a] James v. 10, 11.

more immediate causes and occasions of their degeneracy, which all operate under this first great cause.

Too many pious parents are guilty of fatal mistakes in their manner of educating their children. They are either unreasonably *severe*, or foolishly *indulgent*. In the former case, by treating them with rigour they add strength to those prejudices against serious religion, which are too prevalent in every unrenewed mind. And in the latter, by giving them their way in every thing, they suffer their depraved passions and vicious inclinations to become too turbulent to admit of any restraint. And what is the consequence? No other than might naturally be expected. Such unhappy children, growing up into life amidst wealth and splendour, and having their youthful imagination struck with a thousand ensnaring objects around them; are suddenly precipitated into temptation, and proceeding from one failure in conduct to another, are at length totally and irrecoverably ruined. Such sad instances as these of parental imprudence, and filial profligacy, cannot be enough lamented. Would to God that men of religion, who have families, would guard against these fatal evils of *severity* and *indulgence*, which have proved the occasions of the ruin of thousands of children! —But then, however parents may fail in their duty, let not,

3. Young people excuse themselves of their follies by throwing the blame on them.

Are there any of this character present? Suffer me to expostulate with you, Sirs, one moment. You are conscious to yourselves of great guilt. You have not listened, as you should have done, to the remonstrances of reason and conscience. You have soothed and cherished your own depraved inclinations, thrown yourselves in the way of temptation, eagerly catched at every shadow of objection to the truth of religion, and with the full consent of your hearts complied with the solicitations of sin. And all the evil that hath followed, you must acknowledge, you have righteously deserved. Think not to screen yourselves behind the imprudence, or even the criminal neglects, of your parents. God is just. And at his tribunal you must sooner or later plead guilty.—Let us therefore,

4. With all possible earnestness and affection entreat young people to take warning from the deplorable instance before us,

and to be on their guard against the dangers to which convivial indulgences will expose them.

What if the like tremendous calamities should befal you that befel the family of Job! What if in the midst of your mirth and jollity you should be told, as Belshazzar was by the handwriting on the wall of his palace, that "the boasted reign of lawless vice and intemperance is at an end, and that having been weighed by God in the balance of justice, you are found wanting!" How will *your countenance*, like his, *be changed, your thoughts trouble you, the joints of your loins be loosed, and your knees smite one against another* [a]! Or if that should not be the case, depend upon it you will suffer essentially by these excesses in your temporal, spiritual, and everlasting interests. Your health will be impaired, your substance diminished, your character disgraced, and what is infinitely worse, if mercy does not interpose in a way you have little reason to expect, your soul will be lost for ever.—To what has been said we have only to add,

5. And lastly, one word, to excite parents to the prudent and faithful discharge of their duty.

Let me ask you, my friends, whether the interests of your children do not lie near your hearts? Would you not wish them to be respectable and useful in this world, and for ever happy in that to come? Look well then after their morals. Keep them out of the way of vice and sin. And do your utmost, in a dependance upon the divine grace, to conciliate their regards to religion—that best and noblest of all blessings. But your own personal happiness also is very nearly concerned. Should you fail in the line of conduct you pursue respecting your children, the like anguish you will feel that Job felt on this sad occasion. May you escape a sorrow so pungent, and not need be told to relieve you of despondency, that God can over-rule even this affliction for great good to you in the end, as he did to the pious patriarch, of whose unhappy children we have been discoursing!

PART II.

THE sad story in our text we have considered. Job was a man of wealth and piety. He had a numerous family, no less

a Dan. v. 6.

than seven sons and three daughters. These young people, possessing the means of dissipation, and having perhaps been treated by their parents with too much indulgence; were hurried by their violent passions into a course of vicious practices. They were used to assemble together at each other's houses, and, in the midst of their criminal excesses, to treat the religion of their father, whose company they cared not to enjoy on these occasions, with contempt. He, good man! at home, felt no small pain on their account, fearing that their irreligious and riotous behaviour would draw down the resentments of Heaven upon them. With all the tenderness therefore of a parent, and all the pious fervour of a patriarch, he interposed by prayers and sacrifices on their behalf. But it was too late. Being on a certain day at their eldest brother's house, eating, and drinking wine; in the midst of their mirth and jollity, and probably whilst they were cursing God with their lips as well as in their hearts, there came a great wind, which instantly destroyed the house where they were thus riotously assembled, and buried them beneath the ruins of it.

We have made some general reflections on this sad story, and proceed now to the main thing proposed; which is,

First, To give some account of the nature, origin, and use of *Festivals*, and more especially of domestic or family entertainments; and then,

Secondly, To direct to such a prudent arrangement of circumstances in these circular visits, as may prevent the irregularities they are sometimes the occasions of, and secure all the salutary advantages proposed by them.

First, *Festivals*, of which we are here to give some general account, may be considered in three views, as *religious*—*civil*—and *domestic*.

Religious festivals have obtained time immemorial in all countries, among Pagans, Mahometans, Jews, and Christians. Dismissing, however, those of the two former professions, the rites and grounds of which are all of human invention, and which it is not to our purpose here to examine; it shall suffice to observe, that those only of the two latter owe their authority to divine appointment. The festivals enjoined by Moses were founded in reason, and adapted, circumstanced as the

Israelitish nation was, to answer very important political and religious purposes. But these festivals are now at an end, the positive laws respecting them being expressly repealed by the same authority that enacted them. And under the Christian dispensation, no rite of this sort that I know of is in force, but that of *the Lord's supper*. This was instituted by Christ, who hath commanded that it should be observed to the end of time; and is with good reason spoken of in the New Testament as a *feast a*.

As to the numerous festivals of the Romish church, and those still retained in the established church of this country, there appears to me to be no foundation for them in the word of God. On the contrary, we are rather cautioned against such ceremonial observances, as tending to enslave the minds of men, and to beget a kind of superstition very injurious to religion *b*. To which it may be added, that the Scriptures seem to have purposely left us in the dark about the exact time when those great events happened, the commemoration of which on certain days is nevertheless enjoined by human authority—an authority which, with all becoming deference, we are obliged to protest against as not competent to such injunctions. But it is not our business here to enter particularly into this argument. We must, however, maintain that it is lawful for any number of Christians, with mutual consent, to set apart days of thanksgiving for blessings they have received, and days of humiliation under calamities they suffer; nor is it only allowable to do so, it is their incumbent duty. And indeed it strikes me, that it is an expression of very unreasonable and criminal perverseness in any people who dissent from the established religion of their country; to refuse, at the instance of the civil power, to acknowledge national benefits and to deprecate national judgments.—And then, as to *public* festivals that are purely *civil*, and totally unconnected with religious matters, there surely can be no harm in paying a decent regard to them, provided they are held under due regulations. They have their use in society, to promote benevolence and a good understanding among mankind.

But our view at present is to festivals of a private or *domestic*

a 1 Cor. v. 8. *b* Gal. iv. 9—11.

kind, observed by families periodically, or on occasions of prosperous events, such as marriages, births, removals to new habitations, and the like. In most ages and countries it has been usual for relations and friends to entertain one another, on such occasions, at their houses. The practice has ever been held lawful and commendable. Abraham made a feast at the weaning of his son Isaac *a*. These circular feasts in the family of Job, however abused, were conformable to the custom of the times. Sampson made a feast at his marriage which lasted seven days *b*. And we read of *a yearly sacrifice*, or feast, *there was at Bethlehem, for all the family of Jesse, the father of David c*. Indeed, it were endless to enumerate the many instances of this sort which occur in the Old Testament. And in the New, we frequently read of our Saviour's being entertained at the houses of his friends, and once of his being present at a marriage-feast in Cana of Galilee *d*. A practice therefore in which mankind have so universally agreed, is no doubt natural and lawful. And as it is innocent, so it is capable, if properly conducted, of answering very useful purposes. The harmony of families is hereby preserved, and friendship among individuals promoted. Indeed the noblest ends, civil, moral, and religious may hereby be attained. But then it must be admitted, on the other hand, that these festivities are capable of being abused to the most pernicious purposes. They have sometimes proved the unhappy occasions of intemperance, animosity, and slander; or at least of indecent levity and dissipation. We will go on therefore.

Secondly, To offer some advice respecting the management of these circular visits, in order to prevent the irregularities just mentioned, and to secure the salutary advantages proposed.

Here it must be observed, before we proceed, that the company on these occasions is supposed to consist of various sorts of persons, some elder and others younger; some serious and others gay; but all of them relations and friends, and of decent reputable characters. And their object, we take it for granted, is relaxation, and the enjoyment of a cheerful after-

a Gen. xxi. 8. *b* Judges xiv. 10, 17.
c 1 Sam. xx. 6. *d* John ii. 1, 2.

noon and evening together. Thus circumstanced permit me, Sirs, to exhort you,

1. To beware of *Intemperance.*

You are now under a temptation to this great evil. For though good manners may secure you from brutal excess, yet sitting down at a table covered with delicacies, your appetite keen, your host generous, and your associates all of them brisk and gay; you are in danger of going beyond the strict bounds of sobriety. Be therefore on your guard. Remember intemperance is an odious vice, displeasing to God, degrading to human nature, and productive of the most pernicious consequences. Besides the injury it does the constitution, it deprives persons of many rational and manly pleasures they might expect to enjoy on these occasions, makes them disagreeable to each other, excites animosity, and if carried to the utmost length, brings destruction after it. The manner in which the feasts spoken of in our text were conducted, and the event of them, very well justify the suspicion that intemperance reigned in the family of Job. His sons and daughters, as we have seen, and their companions met together to make merry. They eat and drank without regard either to health or decency. They grew noisy and quarrelsome. From one excess they proceeded to another. Till at length, having cursed God in their hearts, they cursed him with their lips. Horrid impiety? And what was the consequence? Justice revenged the insult offered to Heaven, and these daring sinners were instantly buried beneath the ruins of this wretched temple, consecrated to vice and debauchery.

To enjoy the blessings of providence, and to be more than ordinarily pleasant on these occasions, is by no means criminal. You may eat, and drink, and be cheerful, without offending either God or man. But if you exceed, depend upon it you will pay dearly for it: you will suffer in your health, your character, and your peace. Let the master of the family, therefore, take heed that he does not tempt his guests to intemperance, by presenting them with too great a variety and abundance, or with delicacies unsuitable to *their* rank and to *his* circumstances. Let there be plenty without luxury: and let the rule observed at Ahasuerus's feast be strictly regarded,

to compel no one to eat or drink beyond his inclination a. And let the guests, amidst all the ease and freedom that should prevail on these occasions, see to it they do not transgress the bounds of moderation.

It is related of the Egyptians, by Herodotus and others, that in order to prevent irregularities at their entertainments, and to give some check to excessive mirth; they were used to bring into the room after supper, when they began their wine, a coffin with the image of a dead man carved in wood, (probably the embalmed remains of some ancestor of the family.) This spectacle was presented to each of the company by a person, whose office it was to pronounce distinctly the following words, "Look upon this, and be merry: for such as this, when dead, shalt thou be *b.*" A strange ceremony this! It shews, however, in what abhorrence this very extraordinary people held those extravagancies, which too often disgrace public and domestic festivities. Solomon was a wise and good man. He knew what danger young people are exposed to, especially on these occasions. Nor can we do them a kinder office than to whisper in their ears those memorable words of his, when they are thus tempted to excess —*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thy eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment c.*

2. Let *good order* be observed.

Cheerfulness is an idea always connected with festivity: nor can there be cheerfulness where there is not freedom and ease; and to impose disagreeable restraints upon our guests, would be deemed illiberal and ill-mannerly. But as the company is often on these occasions large, and made up of persons of different denominations, ages and tempers; and as young people, amidst all the gaiety of a festival, are in danger of falling before they are aware into irregularities: some kind of controlling influence, so delicately managed as scarcely to be perceived, should pervade through the assembly. And where should this influence be lodged, or by whom can it be so properly exerted, as the head of the family? The presence of a venerable parent or grandsire, will of itself have an effect to prevent indecent levities; and

a Esth. i. 8. b Herod. lib. ii. c. 45. c Eccl. xi. 9.

should any improper behaviour take place, no one will object to the interposition of such authority. Had Job presided, or at least been present at his eldest son's house, when the feast of which our text speaks was celebrated; the evil that happened there would in all probability have been prevented.

I know it will be said, that old folks are not fit company for young people; and that, upon these occasions, when it is expected all should be sprightly and gay, it may be as well for the grave and gloomy to be absent. And indeed I should think so too, if age and severity, religion and gloominess, were synonymous terms, or qualities totally inseparable. But surely this is not the case. Why may not elderly people be good-natured and cheerful? And who will venture to affirm that religion makes men sour, though some who profess it may be so? Be that however as it will, good sense would teach the heads of families so to conduct themselves on these occasions as to render their company agreeable, and their authority at the same time respectable. Why cannot parents, for a few hours, accommodate themselves to their children? Why not make all proper allowances for them, remembering that they too were once children, and had the same passions these young folks have? Why not endeavour to insinuate themselves into their affections, by all the good-natured arts which parental fondness and prudence suggest? Can any one be so morose as to find fault with this? Is there a man so destitute of the feelings of humanity, as not to be pleased with the sight of a fond father, encircled by a numerous offspring, smiling upon them, partaking with them in their amusements, diverting them with pleasant stories, and doing all in his power to make them happy? No. It is a lovely sight. And this affectionate affability of parents, or those who preside on these occasions, is the rather to be recommended, as it will enable them to convey instruction to the minds of their young guests in the softest manner, and secure to themselves an authority over them which will effectually restrain them from all irregularities. By such means then should good order be preserved on these occasions.—But it is further necessary to this end,

3. That every one should take care to keep a due *command* of his *temper*.

The kind of company we are speaking of resembles that of

the community at large. It consists, as that does, of persons of various ages, characters, passions, and conditions. Wherefore the general rules adopted by all wise and good men for regulating their conduct in the public walk of life, should be observed here. And none of them perhaps is of more consequence than that we have just mentioned. Among ten or a dozen met together in a family-way, some in all likelihood will have their peculiarities of temper and manners. And in an unguarded moment, sprightly young people may, for the sake of a little innocent mirth, carry their raillery to too great a length: so an individual may be disgusted, and in the end the good humour of the whole company interrupted. This evil therefore should be avoided, and especially every thing that looks like ill-natured invective, or malevolent sarcasm. What pity to bear hard on any one person? It is ungenerous and unmanly.

And, on the contrary, none should be disposed to put an ill-construction on what another hastily says. Or if the language is pointed, the edge of it should be blunted by the good-nature of him to whom it is directed; at least prudence should teach him to conceal the pain he may be supposed to feel, rather than unduly resent it. And it is happy when those who are by know how to throw in a word, which like oil may smooth the ruffled passions before they burst into a storm. Such a command of people's tempers will prevent animosity and confusion, contribute mightily to ease and harmony, and open the way to all the innocent pleasures of convivial intercourse. In short, it should be the wish of every one to make the rest happy; and not only ill-humour, but wit itself, should be sacrificed to that object.—Which leads us,

4. To point out the *amusements* proper to be adopted on these cheerful occasions.

In mixed companies, such as these are supposed to be, it will require some ingenuity to adjust matters so as that all may be entertained and improved: and yet upon reflection we shall find this to be no very difficult business. With respect to the younger part of the company, there are devices enough to be contrived to please their imagination, and exercise their wits: nor will it be unamusing to the elder, who cannot forget that they too were one day children, to be spectators of these diversions,

if not actors in them. Human nature is the same in every age, and an inspired prophet, in order to express the future prosperity of the Jews in a striking manner, is allowed to hold up to their view the lively and pleasing idea of *Jerusalem being full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof* a. But, entertaining as it must be to the most sensible people to share awhile in the innocent pastimes of children, friendly discourse should no doubt be the main employment of grown people during these hours of relaxation. To say how such discourse should be managed will require some attention. This however we shall attempt.

In the mean time give me leave to protest against all amusements that are *ensnaring*, *pernicious*, and of *ill-report*. Perhaps it may be deemed an argument of too great preciseness and inflexibility to the custom of the times, to rank among these the prevailing amusement of cards. And indeed he must have little knowledge of the world, who should expect that the considerations which may be mentioned, will have any effect upon the generality of people to dissuade them from it: yet they may have their use with some sober people, who have hitherto considered the epithets just now adopted as severe and indefensible in this application of them.

"*Ensnaring!* you will say,—So are many other amusements that are yet acknowledged to be innocent and lawful." But is not this, I ask, peculiarly so? Has it not made encroachments upon the hearts and time, to say no worse of it, of thousands? Supposing, therefore, it were ever so innocent in itself, would it not be prudent in persons who are anxious about their best interests, to forego a practice, the insinuating bewitching influence of which they cannot be sure they shall have resolution enough to prevent? Is no self-denial required of a Christian? And in questions of a doubtful kind, is it not an argument of wisdom to take that side which is upon the whole the safest?

But to go a step further. Will any one deny that this practice has been followed with the most *pernicious* consequences to an infinite number of people? Has not an eager desire of gain, with all the restless and turbulent passions which accompany it, been thereby excited? Yes it hath, and to a degree, in some instances, which will not allow us to doubt that if Satan

a Zech. viii. 5.

were asked (as he was in the course of the story we have been relating) "Whence comest thou?" his answer would be, "From going to and fro in the houses where gaming is practised." —"But, say you, the moment I find this eager desire of gain excited, or feel myself disturbed with peevishness, ill-humour, or anger, I will throw aside my cards." That is right. But can you be sure you will have so much command over yourself? Be advised then. It is better not to play at all, than to hazard the decision of this question. So you will be safe. *Obsta principiis.*—"Well, but if there is so much danger of your passions being unduly engaged, you will prevent the evil, by resolving henceforth that you will risk nothing, or at least nothing that shall be an object with you." Very well! But to venture nothing, or what is no object, is to deprive the game of its principal allurement, to make it dull and insipid, and to degrade it to a rank with the most trifling amusements.

And now, the question brought to this point, what can you say more in favour of this practice, but that it is with you an affair of indifference: for so that must be considered which does not at all interest the passions. And if it stands thus in your mind, may you not as well have nothing at all to do with it?

But to give the scale a turn, and determine you to a negative, let me collect what has been said in a few words, and add some other reasons of a collateral kind, which, I think a man of prudence and serious piety must acknowledge, have at least some weight in them.—It is admitted, that it is an ensnaring diversion; that multitudes have been essentially hurt by it, insomuch that in some cases it is laid under a legal restraint; that many who do not reprobate it as absolutely criminal, yet think it wrong to countenance what hath been upon the whole the occasion of much evil; that among a great number of serious people it is considered as of *ill-repute*; that self-denial even in indifferent matters, and a caution not to give offence to our Christian brethren, are strongly recommended in Scripture; and lastly, that he who upon these considerations abstains, is by no means chargeable with guilt; but on the contrary, escapes entanglements, secures to himself leisure for profitable and manly amusements, and is sure of having the pleasant reflection, that if he has erred, it has been on the side that is least hazardous.

All this, I presume, will be admitted. And if so, I ask, Is there no weight in these considerations, to induce a prudent and good man to decline this practice which so generally prevails?

Should it be said, as indeed it often is, that it is better to be thus employed than in slandering our neighbours, or suffering our children to go into the indecent and noisy levities too common on the convivial occasions we are discoursing of; all I have to reply is, that if the alternative is unavoidable, no doubt the least evil of the two should be chosen. But this is not the only alternative, as we are now to shew, by giving some directions respecting the management of convivial discourse *a*.

Cheerfulness is the main thing on these occasions, but no one, methinks, can object to the mingling profit with pleasure. Conversation resembles commerce, and a little party collected around a winter's fire may be considered as a company trading upon one joint stock of knowledge, wit, and virtue. Mutual freedom, confidence, and good-nature are necessary to the right management of this business. Nothing should be forced, but all flow on with ease and pleasantry.

But here we must beg leave again to put in our caveat against that illicit kind of commerce just now referred to, I mean the wantonly meddling with the characters and affairs of other people. This is a trade that can bring no profit, though it may some pleasure—a sort of pleasure, if it may be called such, that is procured at an enormous expence. The dealer in this contraband business must have a very depraved heart; and, if detraction and malevolence can make him happy, for that happiness he must be content to part with the good opinion and esteem of the company. But—*Procul, o procul este profani*—Let all such profane abusers of the rites of convivial intercourse be driven hence.

a The Spectator gives us the following little anecdote of Mr. Locke. "Being invited to dine with the then Lords Halifax, Anglesea, and Shaftesbury; immediately after dinner, instead of conversation, the cards were called for, where the bad or good success, produced the usual passions of gaming. Mr. Locke, retiring to a window, and writing, my Lord Anglesea desired to know what he was writing: Why, my Lords, answered he, I could not sleep last night for the pleasure and improvement I expected from the conversation of the greatest men of the age. This so sensibly stung them that they gladly compounded to throw their cards in the fire if he would his paper, and so a conversation ensued fit for such persons." No. 533.

You will say then, What must we talk about?—What?—surely people of good sense, and such you wish to be considered, cannot be at a loss for subjects to discourse of. Let the whole stock of your little party be fairly brought to market, and there will be no want of useful and pleasant commodities to traffic with. Are you all strangers to history, business, nature, morality, and religion? No.—These sources then will furnish an ample supply for the entertainment of the evening.

Suppose some one were to relate a remarkable incident in the story of his ancestors, his family, or his country; upon that tale would hang another, and these pleasantly told would not fail to instruct and amuse.—Suppose the conversation should turn upon matters of trade and commerce, may it not be so managed as to divert at the same time it informs?—Or if a curious question respecting any of the works of nature is started, think you that some present of a sprightly imagination are not capable of investigating it, so as to create admiration and pleasure?—Young people have memories: and why may they not be allowed to recite productions of innocent wit and pleasantry in poetic numbers? Who shall be offended at the entertainment?—Or if the attention should be led by some circumstance to a point of morality, may not the discussion of it for half an hour very agreeably engage your judgment and passions?—Some events of a singular kind may have happened to this or that person in the course of the past year, either escapes from eminent danger, or the acquisition of some unexpected good. Why may not such events, with all the circumstances of them, be related; and so the whole company become sharers with their friend in his happiness, and enjoy with him a grateful remembrance of the seasonable interposition of Providence?—I will add, if there is a prudent, pious, cheerful Christian in the circle; why may he not be allowed to throw in now and then a hint or reflection of a religious kind? It may shed light on the mind, and do good to the heart, without savouring of affectation, or tending to give disgust. And such hint or reflection leading on to further discourse of the same nature, (if it meet the approbation of the company) will put them all, it is to be hoped, into a temper to attend,

5. To the duties of *family worship*.

I am aware the very mention of family worship on these occasions, will be apt to give offence to some sort of people. But why? Is there any thing in this service incompatible with the cheerfulness of a festival? Surely it is not, at least it ought not to be, a tedious, formal, uninteresting business. And if there is a stated season for it in the house where we are assembled, what decent satisfactory reason can be assigned for setting it aside? It will not take up much time: and to say your minds are so dissipated that you cannot compose yourselves to it, is in effect to say that your mirth has exceeded the bounds of prudence. And will such excuse be pleasing to God or to yourselves on the reflection? How disingenuous to make your duty to him, from whom you derive all the pleasures of convivial intercourse, servilely yield to your ungenerous abuse of those pleasures! On the contrary, will not a quarter of an hour spent in prayer and praise to God, be likely to have the happiest and most salutary effect? It will recall your wandering thoughts and passions to the supreme Good. It will revive in your breasts a pleasant remembrance of your obligations, as a family, to the Father of mercies. It will put you in perfect good humour with one another, and send you to your several houses and your rest with easy minds, if not joyful hearts.

And now to this arrangement of circumstances, relative to family-associations, we might oppose the irregularities too frequent on such occasions; and draw an argument from thence to enforce what we have been recommending. But I do not mean here to lead you into houses where gross immoralities are practised. Scenes of intemperance, lewdness, and profaneness, such as drew down the vengeance of Heaven upon the families of Job, Eli, Aaron and others; are too painful to be held up to the view of a virtuous mind. And no person who has any regard to decency, will hesitate a moment to determine, whether the pleasures of an evening spent in the manner we have recommended, are not far preferable to those of lawless mirth and dissipation.

But what I mean to observe is, that the little trifling amusements mentioned above as proper for children, and very allowable on these occasions; should not wholly engross the time of grown people. Such diversions may for a while give pleasure:

but is that pleasure comparable to the entertainment resulting from the rational amusements we have proposed? The freely discoursing on subjects civil, moral, and divine, is a manly, cheerful, and improving way of spending our leisure hours. Knowledge thus circulated, with all the aid that variety of wit, imagination, and reason can give it; will entertain and enrich the whole company: and the social affections hereby excited will enliven the animal spirits, and add a glow of real pleasure to the heart. Every one will be delighted with this gainful commerce, carry away with him the most agreeable reflections, and impatiently wish for the next return of these convivial meetings.

DISCOURSE XII.

HEAVEN CONSIDERED AS A FAMILY.

JOHN XIV. 2.—*In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.*

AMONG the many figures used in Scripture to represent the blessedness of heaven, none is more instructive and pleasing than that of a *Family*. Domestic connections are the first in nature, and if the duties resulting from them were rightly discharged, they would be productive of the noblest enjoyments. With the assistance therefore of this figure we propose now to lead you into a contemplation on the joys of heaven; and from thence to derive an argument in favour of those tempers and duties which have been so largely explained and recommended in the preceding discourses. Now it will be necessary, at our entrance on this delightful subject, to present you with the picture of a family that approaches as near to perfection as possible. Such a picture we shall draw. Excuse me if the colouring is too high. We mean it should glow on the bosom of the be-

holder, and kindle there all the passions of admiration, delight, and rapture.

The family we have in our eye (and I flatter myself more than one such family has existed in our world) were in affluent circumstances. Their habitation was neat, convenient, and elegant; it did honour to the skill of the architect, without offending the simplicity of nature. The father was a wise, affectionate, good man: a sincere disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose doctrine he professed, and whose example he followed. A rich treasure of knowledge he had acquired, and with it the happy art of communicating that knowledge to others in a plain, easy, and pleasant manner. The welfare of those entrusted to his care lay near his heart, and the schemes he daily planned for promoting it, which originated in prudence and benevolence, succeeded to his wish. His fervent piety, like the precious ointment that ran down from the head of Aaron to the skirts of his garment, diffused its sacred fragrance through all the house. The counsels of divine wisdom, which flowed like a silver stream from his lips, were sweetly mingled with the most pleasing expressions of paternal tenderness and love; and his was the felicity to persuade with greater energy by his example than his words.

The partner of his life, inexpressibly dear to him, had all the charms which virtue and religion could add to a form that commanded admiration and love. She was modest, prudent, and kind. Her happiness consisted in attaching the affections of her family to herself, and so disposing the affairs of it as that harmony and cheerfulness should prevail through the house: and the measures she took to this end were followed with the same success that crowned the generous offices of her husband. Nor was she less attentive than he to the duties she owed to God: her devotion was as sincere, though perhaps more rapturous than his. Such being the character of these amiable people, it is not to be wondered that they reigned securely in the affections of their domestics; and possessed an authority over them, on all occasions cordially acknowledged without their seeming to assert it.

Their children (for they had a numerous family) inherited the virtues of their parents, as well as a striking resemblance of their

persons. While young they fondly hung on the bosom of the mother, amply rewarding maternal attention and care with the playful and endearing smiles of infant-simplicity. Beauty bloomed in their countenances; and as the powers of reason expanded, the seeds of religion, which had been carefully sown in their breasts, sprung up under a divine influence, and promised a fair and joyful harvest. They knew, they felt, they acknowledged their ignorance, guilt, and depravity; and looked for pardon and eternal life through the mediation and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each step they advanced towards manhood, furnished some pleasing proof of their progress in knowledge, purity, and benevolence. Filial obedience was their delight, and when a temptation to undutifulness at any time found access to their imagination, it was quickly opposed by the warm resentments of unconquerable attachment. The social commerce daily carried on between their parents and them, in the most soft and easy manner, was a continual source of growing pleasure to them both: as was also the commerce that subsisted among themselves. Friendship, that balm of human life, was here enjoyed with little or no interruption. A mutual exchange of sentiments and passions, accompanied with a thousand offices of generous love, confirmed the union nature had created. And so they were happy in a degree beyond what is usual in the present life. They tenderly bore each other's griefs, and sincerely shared in each other's joys. *How good, how pleasant* must it have been to *behold brethren thus dwelling together in unity!*

The characters, too, and deportment of the servants were such as entitled them, not only to the good-will, but the affection of the family. They were modest, faithful, diligent, and cheerful; contented and happy in their stations, and ever disposed to do their duty from motives of love as well as interest. The golden rule *of doing to others as we would have them do unto us,* was deeply imprinted on their breasts: and it was their aim not only to escape the reproaches of a self-accusing conscience, but to enjoy the commendations of those they served, and more especially the approbation of the great God.

In a house composed of such members, it may be easily imagined peace and pleasure must have abounded. The welfare of the whole was the object of every individual, and each one par-

took liberally of the general stock of happiness which their mutual labours produced. Serenity and joy appeared in every countenance. One office of kindness succeeded another. Business and relaxation had their proper hours assigned them. Now they were in action, then at rest: now employed in their several departments, and then enjoying the enlivening pleasures of social intercourse. Their table was richly spread with the bounties of Providence, and their cup ran over. Alike strangers to sickening intemperance and guilty mirth, they ate their food with relish, and drank their wine with cheerfulness. The friends of virtue and religion met a hearty welcome at their board, and indigence was liberally relieved by their hospitality. Their eyes pitied the distressed, and their hands clothed the naked: the widow, the fatherless, and stranger blessed them. The stated seasons of devotion they considered as the most useful and improving portions of time. With pleasure they assembled, with attention they listened to the doctrines and precepts of God's word, and, animated by one spirit, they addressed their prayers and praises to the great Author of all their enjoyments.

Thus happily they passed their days, distributed in prudent proportions between action, study, recreation, and devotion. Following the simple dictates of nature, they acquired and preserved health; living on good terms with their neighbours, they secured to themselves peace; cultivating domestic affections, they enjoyed a flow of innocent and enlivening pleasure; improving their opportunities for contemplation and discourse, they grew in wisdom and virtue; and conversing daily with Heaven in the duties of religion, they were gradually prepared for the sublime services and joys of that better world.

Such was the family we meant to describe, and whose story in many interesting particulars of it, it would have been both edifying and pleasing to relate. But we forbear.—Enough, methinks, has been said to kindle in our breasts an ardent desire to copy after their amiable example, and to partake of the rich pleasures they enjoyed. Would to God there were many such families as these! But we have another object in view by holding up this picture to our imagination: it is to assist us in our attempts to frame some conception of the blessedness of the future state. This figure, you see, our Saviour adopts in the

text, and upon this figure we mean to ground the present discourse.

The apostles, to whom the words were more immediately addressed, may be considered as composing one family. Over this family our Saviour, in the character of an indulgent parent, presided. With them he from day to day associated, in all the habits of the most tender and familiar friendship; defending their persons, supplying their wants, assisting their labours, and, by his instructive and animating discourse, at once enlightening their understandings, and diffusing heavenly joy through their hearts. But he was now at the eve of his final departure from them. The tidings of this sad event with which he had just acquainted them, filled their breasts with the deepest anxiety and sorrow. With all the tenderness therefore of a dying parent, he administers seasonable consolation to them. *Let not*, says he, *your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.* So he leads their views forward to the world whither he was going, assuring them that they should by and by follow him to that blissful state, and there enjoy in the highest perfection, those domestic pleasures, of which they had here had some taste. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you.*—Words which, I need take no pains to prove to you, may with truth be considered as addressed to all his faithful disciples in every age and country, as well as the apostles.

Heaven he compares to a *house*, to convey an idea of its beauty, convenience, and stability. This house he tells them was *his Father's*, that great Being to whom he stood related after a manner infinitely more glorious than any other, as he was his own, his only begotten, and well-beloved Son. A house built by his Father, in which he constantly resides, and where he displays his glories in the most perfect manner. In this house there are *mansions*, abiding places *a*, apartments for every one of the family, suited to their several capacities and conditions. Of these mansions, he tells them, there are *many*, to intimate that the members of this family are numerous, and that provision is made for them all. And *to prepare* this happy *place* for them, and for all who stood related to him, was his object

a Μονα.

in going thither, as well as to receive himself the just reward of his sufferings. To all which he kindly adds, that *if it were not so, he would have told them.* They had ere this heard of heaven, framed some idea of it, and been firmly persuaded of its reality. And they might rest assured, such was his affection for them, and such the convincing proofs he had given them of it, that if they had been imposed upon in this matter, he would not have failed to undeceive them.

Now, upon all these expressive circumstances in our Saviour's figurative description of heaven, assisted by a variety of other passages of Scripture; we might ground many positions respecting the nature, perfection, extent, and continuance of the heavenly blessedness. And from thence we might proceed to a particular examination of the evidence of a future state of happiness, to which that peculiar mode of language our Lord uses naturally leads us—A mode of language admirably expressive of his native simplicity and ingenuousness, and of the affectionate regards he bore to those with whom he was thus familiarly discoursing. On these things we might, I say, with great profit and pleasure insist. But, waving the particular and accurate investigation of these important points, we will content ourselves with a general illustration of the metaphor before us, and the rather as this treatment of our text best comports with our intention in the choice of it. And so we will proceed to improve the subject.

Let us, then, consider the state of the blessed under the idea of a *Family.*

To this figure there is an allusion in other passages of Scripture besides our text. The people of God, you need not be told, are often described as his children and servants; and *of him, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole family in heaven and in earth is named a.* Now the ideas which this pleasing emblem suggests, we shall class under the following particulars—the *House* in which this family dwells—the *Members* of which it is composed—their *Employment* and *Pleasures*—and the *Continuation* of their existence and happiness.

I. Heaven is the *House* in which this family resides.

Beauty, convenience, and stability, as we intimated before,

a Eph. iii. 14, 15.

are the ideas which first strike our minds when we speak of a house. And when we attentively consider the fair mansions of the great, while we are pleased and delighted with the proportion, elegance, and grandeur of these noble structures, we fail not to admire the skill of the architect. The effect leads us back to the cause, and we presume that a builder who had so happily succeeded, were he to exert his powers on a larger scale, a plan of still wider extent, he would give further proofs of his ability. So palaces the most superb, like those of which we read in ancient history, rise to our view, and we are struck with wonder and veneration.

In such manner we may proceed in our attempts to frame some idea of that august edifice, which the great Parent of the universe has erected, at an infinite expence, for the entertainment of his family above. A sample he has given of his power and skill in the creation of this world, the mansion he has built for the residence of mankind during their abode on earth. What a pleasing employment to a contemplative mind to survey the wonderful building in all its parts, and the several parts in the relation they bear to the whole! When we go down to the foundations of this house, consider the superstructure raised thereon, examine the materials of which it is framed, and the manner they are arranged, enter into its several apartments, measure its prodigious extent, dwell on the innumerable beauties with which it is adorned, and then gaze on the magnificent covering cast over it; when we thus contemplate, I say, this house built for the residence of man, how are our minds overwhelmed with the most stupendous ideas of the power and skill of the great Architect!

Hence then we may conclude with unquestionable truth, that the house he has erected for the everlasting reception and entertainment of his own proper family—the family he most tenderly loves—the family he has redeemed with the blood of his own Son; must be commodious, beautiful, and splendid beyond imagination. It is *the House of God*—the greatest of all Beings! It is *the House of our Father*—the best of all Beings! When infinite greatness and goodness unite to prepare a mansion for the residence of favourites, that mansion can want nothing to make it glorious in the highest degree.—Let us now enquire,

II. Who are the *Members* that compose this family?

The Head of the family is the ever-blessed God, the fountain, centre, and essence of excellence, perfection, and happiness. What tongue can describe, what mind conceive his peerless glories? The most exalted seraph cannot comprehend them. When our imagination has wandered through the universe, collected every possible excellence, and attributed them to one immense, omnipotent, and eternal Being; we shall even then have acquired but a faint idea of God. Such however is the character of him who deigns to be the Master of this august house, the Father of this illustrious family! To a mortal eye he is invisible, but not so to the happy spirits who compose his household above. Their intellectual sight is so refined, strengthened, and enlarged, as not to be hurt or dazzled by the full blaze of glories poured upon it from the Sun of righteousness. They see God: they know him, they converse with him after a manner the most pleasing, delightful, and rapturous.

As *Master* of this great family he presides over their affairs with consummate wisdom and prudence, takes effectual care of their interests, prepares their table for them, and causes their cup to run over; assigns to every one his proper service, accepts their offices of duty and love, and rewards their obedience with infinite liberality and goodness. And as a *Father*, he is ever among them in all the habits of the most endearing familiarity, unbosoms his soul to them, assures them of his favour, enriches them with his bounty, and makes them happy beyond expression and imagination. The most perfect picture that can be drawn of an earthly parent, exhibits but a shadowy resemblance of his parental wisdom, faithfulness, and love. These qualities, in whatever degree they may be supposed to exist among any of his intelligent creatures, originate from him: when he therefore in the character of a Father assembles his children about him, they will no doubt be displayed in all their transcendent perfection.

Christ is *the Son of the living God a*, his *own, his only-begotten Son b*, the *brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person c*. But it is in the relation he bears

a Matt. xvi. 16. b Rom. viii. 32.—John i. 14. c Heb. i. 3.

to the children of this family as their elder brother that we here consider him. Such was his compassion for them, such his love to them, that he voluntarily became a man, and wept and bled and died, to restore them to their original innocence, and entitle them to the joys of heaven. *As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same a.* Although, *being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name b.* He rose from the dead, ascended in that very nature he had assumed up into heaven, and there displays his mediatorial glories to the view of *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands whom he has redeemed by his blood,* and who all join in ascribing *blessing, honour, glory, and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever c.* What unutterable joy must this happy company feel, while their wondering eyes are thus entertained with the lively memorials of their elder brother's unexampled compassion and love!

There too the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who proceeds from the Father and the Son *d*, dwells.—That divine Spirit who descended upon the Saviour at his baptism *in a bodily shape like a dove e*, and who poured such a rich variety of gifts and graces upon the apostles quickly after their master's triumphant ascent up into heaven *f*. There, I say, he dwells, irradiating the minds of the blessed, uniting their hearts to God and each other, and diffusing the fragrant odours of his grace through all the house. Under his auspicious influence, descending like the precious ointment on the head of Aaron, or like the dew on the mountains of Sion, the fruits of knowledge, purity and friendship, are ripened to the noblest perfection, and enjoyed with increasing flavour and delight to all eternity.

The children of the family come next to be considered. Angels are thus described in Scripture: but, that we may the better conform to the figure in our text, we will confine the

a Heb. ii. 14. *b* Phil. ii. 6—9. *c* Rev. v. 9, 11, 13.
d John xv. 26. *e* Luke iii. 22. *f* Acts ii. 1—20.

character of children here to the redeemed from among men; and the rather, as our Saviour had them chiefly in his eye. These not only received in common with others their existence from God, the Former of their bodies, and the Father of their spirits; but all the rights and privileges, and all the powers and capacities peculiar to children. They had wandered from their Father's house, and spent their substance in a strange land; but by the mediation of Christ their elder brother, and the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, they were brought back to his church here on earth, the nursery or school he has appointed for the purpose of training and preparing his young children for the employments and pleasures of heaven. And from thence at the proper time they are removed, and united to the general assembly and church of the first-born above. The family is not indeed at present made up, the children are not all collected together. But when that happy period shall arrive, what an immensely numerous and illustrious company will this be!—A company consisting of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and all the excellent of the earth: men of God who had existed in all ages and parts of the world, and under various dispensations, characters, and descriptions; who were once struggling with the incapacities, prejudices, and painful feelings of infancy and childhood; but are now arrived at man's estate, and possessed of abilities equal to the noblest exertions, and the most sublime gratifications. Once immersed in darkness, sin, and sorrow; but now exulting in the enjoyment of light, purity, and happiness. All illuminated by the same divine Spirit, and actuated by the same heavenly principle. All of one mind and one heart, united to God their Father, and to each other as brethren, by the indissoluble bands of the most perfect friendship, and the most generous love.—Such are the children of the family.

And if the holy angels, agreeably to the figure we have adopted may be considered as the servants of this princely household; nothing can be wanting to add dignity and glory to it. Yes, they are the servants of the great King, nor do they look upon it as beneath them *to minister*, at his command, *to the heirs of salvation* a. When he sent them on this errand to our world,

a Heb. i. 14.

they clapped their wings for joy, they instantly took their downward flight, and with rapture sung, *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will towards men below* a. They —friendly spirits! watch around the tents of good men during their stay on earth, guard them with their flaming shields from the powers of darkness, bear them hence at death to the bosom of their Father, wipe the falling tear of mortality from their eyes, array them in the princely robes appointed them, bid them welcome to their long-wished for home, and are never weary of rendering them every possible office of kindness and love through an endless duration of existence.—Of such *Members* is the heavenly family composed.

The next question is, How they are *employed*, and what are their *pleasures?* But this enquiry, with what follows, we must refer to the next Sermon.

PART II.

We have considered the *House* which the blessed God has built, for the reception and entertainment of his family; and the *Members* of which it consists. Let us now proceed,

III. To enquire, how they are *employed* and what are their *pleasures?*

Action is necessary to enjoyment. The not exerting our powers is an occasion of misery as well as our abusing them. It is not, therefore, the depraved and profligate only that are unhappy, but the thoughtless and indolent. We cannot, indeed, in the present life exert our faculties to their full extent, without feeling more or less pain and weariness. God has however wisely so ordered it, that the good proposed shall compensate the fatigue endured in the acquisition of it. And this consideration operates very generally on mankind, to rouse them from sloth, and stimulate them to action. But in heaven the powers of nature, restored to their full vigour, exert themselves to the utmost without any fatigue or uneasiness. So the end of our existence will be attained in the most pleasing manner, and we become completely happy.

Now to apply this reasoning to that domestic idea of heaven we have adopted. The pleasures of the family are usually con-

a Luke ii. 14.

trasted to the hurries and fatigues of business, and so we conceive of our house as a place of rest. But this rest does not consist in a total cessation from action: if it did we should not be happy. It is true we here repose ourselves, and by food and sleep here recruit our animal spirits. But we do not pass all our time in indolence. We have our several employments; this and that active service to render one another, and the business of amusing and improving our minds by meditation, reading, and familiar discourse. The retirement of a house is favourable to study, and the piety, good-sense, and friendly dispositions of the several branches of a family are noble incentives to conversation. Occupied with these pleasing ideas of domestic employment, how cheerfully does the man of business in the evening of the day retire to his habitation! What joy does he feel to find himself encircled by his family, partaking with them of the bounties of indulgent Providence, and enjoying with them in perfect ease and tranquillity, the enlivening pleasures of social intercourse!

Thus may we conceive of heaven. At the evening of the day—the hurrying, fatiguing, troublesome day of human life—the good man retires to his home, his Father's house, the mansion which Christ his elder brother has prepared for him. There he ceases from his labours, rests in the bosom of his God, and has no other recollection of his past pains, disappointments, and sorrows, than contributes to increase his happiness, and heighten his joys. There he finds himself instantly surrounded with that blessed company we have been speaking of; all expressing by their cheerful smiles the satisfaction they feel in his having joined them, and all with infinite cordiality tendering him offices of love, too numerous to be reckoned, too substantial and glorious to be described. And there, which is the main thing we have in view, his intellectual powers are employed, without embarrassment or weariness, in the contemplation and discussion of the most pleasing, noble, and improving subjects.

Here, would our time admit, and might imagination be allowed its full scope, with what pleasant scenes might we feast our eyes, with what ravishing discourse delight our ears! Methinks I see this happy family, assembled in the fair and stately mansion their Father has erected for their eternal abode, arrayed in

the pure and splendid garments of immortality, health, peace, and joy, blooming on their countenances, their Friend and Saviour bidding them welcome to the richest banquet his love could prepare, angels waiting on them, and the Master of the house unveiling his glories to their view. Methinks I hear their discourse. The subject is immensely grand—the glories of the ever-blessed God displayed in his works. They have powers for investigating the subject. Their attention is fixed with increasing delight to it. Every step they advance in their enquiries about it, is marked with precision and certainty. The heavenly vision glorious as it is oppresses not their mental sight: the ecstatic joy it affords disturbs not their perception of the object. Their ideas and reasonings are interchanged with unimaginable swiftness and facility. And the pleasures which flow in one perpetual stream from the inexhaustible fountain of knowledge, are common to them all.

The theme hath infinite varieties, each of which is a new source of admiration, love, and delight.—Now they fix their eye on the first great Cause of all things, whose nature the brightest intelligences cannot comprehend, whose essence no created imagination can explore. They gaze on his glories, which surprise, but do not confound: inspire reverence, but forbid fear.—From him they turn their attention to the works of his hands.—Now the skill of the great architect in the house built for their residence, its furniture, and entertainment, employs their contemplation: and then the wonderous effects of his wisdom and power in the more remote provinces of his boundless empire.—Now they dwell on the nature, capacities, and interests of the various orders of beings that hold a different rank in the creation from themselves; and then on their own nature, faculties, laws, and ends of existence.—Now the scheme of Providence respecting the world whence they came, occupies their minds; states, kingdoms, and empires passing in review before their astonished eyes: and then the long, the diversified, the entertaining detail of each other's history holds their attention with growing delight.—Now they call over the several events that happened to them, from the moment they came into existence to that of their translation thither; and all the circumstances that combined, under the controlling influence

of Heaven, to bring about their final felicity: and then they recollect with rapturous joy the intimate connection of these events with the greatest and most sublime of all, their redemption by the death of the Son of God. On this transporting subject *wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence* [a], they exert the utmost powers of imagination and reason. At every step they take new light breaks in upon their minds, and new joys circulate around their hearts. So a pure flame of ingenuous gratitude and love is enkindled in their bosoms, to the Father of mercies who laid the plan in the counsels of eternity, to the divine Jesus who carried it into execution, and to the Holy Spirit the Comforter who displays the glories of it to their enraptured sight.—Thus employed in contemplating the most glorious objects, discussing the noblest truths, conversing about the most interesting events, and intermingling with their discourse the harmonious melody of the most exalted devotion and praise; thus employed, I say, how pure, substantial, and satisfying must their pleasures be!

Go into a family of piety and love.—Some few such families there are in our world.—Read the character of each member in his countenance. Be a witness of the tender offices of kindness they render each other. Join their company. Make one with them in their parties of innocent amusement. Listen to their instructive, entertaining, and endearing discourse. Hear their pleasant details of interesting events. Enter into their more serious reasonings. And share with them in the comforts and joys of their undissembled and fervent devotion. You will say with rapture, *Verily this is the house of God, it is the gate of heaven* [b]! But the pleasures enjoyed by this little society, though they may distantly resemble those of the blessed above, fall infinitely short of them.

How commodious is the habitation in which this infinitely large and noble society reside! No convenience is wanting to make it pleasant and delightful in the highest degree. There are apartments in it for every one of the family, and Christ is gone before to make them ready. How delicious is their food! It is the food of angels. How highly flavoured are their joys! They drink of rivers of pleasure that flow from the throne of

a Eph. i. 8. b Gen. xxviii. 17.

God and the Lamb. How illustrious the company! They are all wise, holy, and good; free from every possible taint of folly, imperfection, and sin. Each one enjoys health, ease, and tranquillity; without abatement or interruption. They are upon terms of the strictest amity and the most cordial friendship. Their discourse is upon subjects as delightful as they are instructive; subjects that afford the richest pleasure to the imagination, and diffuse a sacred glow of divine affection through the heart. The Father of the family is present in the midst of them, pouring upon them the noblest profusion of beneficence and love. Their elder Brother and Friend, *who loved not his life unto death* for their sakes, unbosoms his heart to them. The Holy Spirit not only irradiates their understandings, but in the character of a Comforter possesses them of the richest consolations. In fine, the innumerable hosts of angels who attend them, are happy in contributing all in their power to their happiness.—What refined, what exalted, what divine pleasures must this family enjoy!

The great apostle of the Gentiles, in the midst of his labours here on earth, was admitted for a few moments into their company. And so enraptured was he with the joys he there felt, that *whether he was in the body or out of the body he could not tell: it was paradise, and he heard things which it is not lawful for a man to utter a.* Let us check our imagination then in its flight. We have not senses capable of sustaining the heavenly vision; we have not faculties at present equal to the investigation of this sublime subject.—One thing, however, more must be observed of this family, and that is,

IV. The *Continuation* of their blessedness.

When we visit the pious families that have been described, and share with them a few hours in their employments and pleasures; how reluctantly do we take our leave of them! And when we see death, that cruel enemy of human felicity, breaking up these little societies, or at least ravishing some of the lovely members that compose them from the embraces of the rest; how do we mingle our tears with theirs, and silently say within ourselves! "Ah! it had been better for them, if their pleasures had suffered more allays and interruptions: the event

a 2 Cor. xii. 1—4.

would have been less painful." Sad sight! to see dutiful and affectionate children pouring their unavailing tears over the tomb of a parent, whose counsels, company, and love were continual sources of pleasure to them! or over the graves of brethren and sisters, with whom they dwelt in the sweetest harmony and friendship! So however it must be: so it is for their real interest that it should be. The several members of these communities on earth are called away in their turn to join the general assembly above. But, oh! how infinitely delightful the thought!—that assembly once met shall never, never separate. Their habitation, persons, employments, friendships, and pleasures shall suffer no change, diminution, interruption, or end.

The fairest mansion on earth must in a course of time decay. Not a vestige now remains of those dwellings, so famed in Scripture for the piety, friendship, and hospitality of their inhabitants. Yea, the time will come when the vast fabric of this world shall be laid in ruins. But such is not the destiny of this more noble house above. No earthquake shall shake it, no fire consume it, no tempest destroy it. It shall remain for ever a monument of the skill and power of him who hath built it. It is *a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* [a].

Here, one generation passeth away and another cometh. Parents die, and their children succeed them: and after a while, families that have boasted of their ancient extraction become extinct. But in this house above all are immortal. Sickness, pain, and death have no admission there. Health ever blooms in their countenances, and not the least declension of spirits, vigour, or strength disturbs their repose. They feel no change—they dread no change. They are all happily met together, and have the comfort of knowing they shall never part. It is the will of the eternal God, the Father of the family, that their existence, like his own, should have no end.

A thousand circumstances arise, in this state of vicissitude and sin, to dissolve our connections, interrupt our duties, disturb our discourse, and diminish if not annihilate our pleasures. Though the family is not broke up, yet by this or that cross

[a] 2 Cor. v. 1.

accident its affairs are deranged, its members for a while separated, one and another rendered incapable of their proper business, smiling plenty interdicted, pleasant discourse interrupted, the harmony of the house threatened, and all its joys sometimes converted into sorrow and sadness. But in heaven the reverse is the case. The order of the family is preserved inviolable, every one fills his proper station, without a wish or an occasion of absence, one office of love follows another in perpetual succession, plenty ever abounds, peace reigns undisturbed, social intercourse flows on without interruption, friendships contracted are never dissolved, and pleasures new, various, and refined are enjoyed without satiety, diminution, or end. The sun once risen on those pleasant abodes never goes down: and when millions of years have rolled round, the happiness of the family is but beginning.

Thus have we attempted some faint description of this illustrious family above. A faint description it indeed is: yet I flatter myself it has made such an impression on our hearts, that none of us can forbear saying—"Is there really such a family as this?"—"If there is, May I hope at death to be admitted into it?"—"And if I may, How shall I, in the mean while, express my gratitude to him who has opened so glorious a prospect to my view?" To these questions permit me, by way of improvement, to assist you and myself in making a reply.

1. What we have affirmed of a future state of happiness is true.

We have, indeed, adopted a figure to assist us in our description of it: but to that figure our Lord Jesus Christ has directed us. *In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you.* And he who said this *is the faithful witness* [a]: he is *the truth* [b] itself. The apostles had conceived a hope of this state before he thus expressed himself: and such was his integrity and benevolence that we may be sure, to use his own language, *had there been no such state, he would have told them.*

It will scarce be expected, that I should here enter particularly into the evidence of this most cheerful and animating truth: or I might shew you, that the admitting it involves in it no

a Rev. i. 5. b John xiv. 6.

absurdity or impossibility—that whoever considers the powers of the human soul, the history of Providence, the present state of the world, and many characters that actually exist on our earth; must allow that it is highly probable—and that the positive evidence of Christianity, beaming upon us like the sun in all its meridian glory, to possibility and probability adds certainty. But on these topics of argument we will not now insist. All I mean is to derive a presumptive or collateral proof of what we cannot but wish to be true, from the figure which has assisted us in our conceptions of it. A family, a pious family, especially a family that answers to the description in the beginning of this discourse, is methinks a shadow of which heaven is the substance. Visit the pleasant mansion wherein the God of grace deigns to dwell, and say whether you are not struck at your very entrance with this prophetic inscription wrote in fair characters upon it—THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

Man is an intelligent being. As such he is made for society. Families are the first social connections that take place among men. These are so constructed by the wise appointment of Heaven, as to create a union the most permanent and endearing. And this union, were the duties of it practised, would be a continual source of truly noble and rational pleasure. But alas! sin has shaken the very foundations of these little societies, defaced their beauty, and spoiled their joys. They however still exist, and, amidst all the disgrace and injury they have suffered, still exhibit proofs of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, and still remind us of the happiness we were originally formed to enjoy. If therefore instances can be produced of any of these communities emerging out of the general wreck of human apostacy, recovering somewhat of their ancient beauty and glory, and becoming in a degree at least, wise, holy, and happy; one would be apt from thence to derive a probable argument, in favour of some further benevolent intention of the great Author of all good. Who knows, one cannot forbear saying, but these domestic pleasures, springing from the pure source of genuine religion, may be presages of more noble pleasures to be enjoyed hereafter? Perhaps the peace, order, friendship and love, restored to this and that dwelling, are the early dawn of future and everlasting bliss. This and that house is become a temple

of the living God: the Holy Spirit has condescended to take up his abode there; there to shed abroad the sweet perfumes of his grace, and to conciliate some if not all the members of it to the dominion of divine love. And would the blessed God thus dwell with men on earth, if he were not disposed to admit them by and by to dwell with him in heaven? Surely this happy house is a figure, a type, a model of that infinitely more noble mansion my Bible tells me, he has prepared for the whole family of the redeemed above. Religion would not again have flourished on earth, if the glorious prospects which bring it into existence were all to expire in death.—But the next question is,

2. May I hope, when called away from my habitation here below, to be admitted into this blessed family above?

An interesting question it is! It demands our most serious attention. Ah! my friends, to little purpose have we held up to your view the domestic employments and pleasures of heaven, if you should by and by be denied a share in them; if when you knock at the gate of that house, the master should say, *I know you not.* As therefore we regard our present comfort and our everlasting happiness, let us well consider the grounds on which we are to expect admission into this family, and what is necessary to prepare us for associating with such company.

If heaven is our lot, we must acknowledge ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for it. *The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord* a. We must receive it with all that humility which a sense of our demerit inspires; and with all that gratitude which the value of the gift itself, and the immense expence at which it is procured, demand. Who that considers his guilt and the punishment it merits, on the one hand; and the infinitely glorious character of the Saviour and his deep humiliation and sufferings, on the other; but feels himself disposed most cheerfully to acknowledge with the apostle, that *by grace he is saved, through faith, and that not of himself, for it is the gift of God* b. But a meetness for heaven is as necessary as a right to it. And since they who are to compose the family above are gradually prepared for it here, by the salutary influence of the Holy Spirit; let us examine ourselves carefully on this great question, whether any of the ge-

a Rom. vi. 23. b Eph. ii. 8.

nuine fruits of his operations appear in our tempers and lives. To those fruits we will confine ourselves at present which are proper to our domestic character; a family of religion being, as we have shewn, an emblem of heaven, and the nursery or school wherein men are trained up for the employments and pleasures of that state.

A family destitute of all order, decency, and love, and devoted to pride, sensuality, and contention; we may be sure can have no connection with the general assembly above. That house too bears but little affinity to it, whatever character it may have for sobriety and good manners, which hath no altar erected in it to God, and is a total stranger to all acts of piety and devotion. There may be indeed one here and there in these families, who is a candidate for heaven; a lonely plant that sheds its sweet fragrance amidst the thorns and briers of these wretched wildernesses. And on the contrary, in families truly venerable for their regards to religion, there may be here and there a root of bitterness springing up which shall by and by be rejected. But the members that shall compose the family above, are chiefly to be looked for in the mansions where religion hath set up her lovely banner, and diffuses her sweet and balmy influence. Now what is our domestic character? "Let us enquire how we have hitherto been used to conduct ourselves towards God, our parents, brethren, wives, children, preceptors, attendants, friends, associates, and servants: whether we have treated them unbecomingly either in deed or word *a*?"

Ye *Masters*, have ye dedicated your houses to God? Have ye vowed to Heaven that vice shall not enter your dwellings? Have ye nobly resolved to exert the authority of kings and priests in these little commonwealths over which you preside? Do you sternly frown upon sin? Do you tenderly cherish every appearance of virtue and religion? Do you devoutly officiate from day to day at the altars you have set up in your tents? And is it your aim to enforce your instructions by your example? Be assured when ye lay down your office as kings and

a Πως προσεινηνεχαι μεχρι νυν θεοις, γονευσιν, αδελφοις, γυναικι, τεκνοις, διδασκαλοις, προχυσι, φιλοις, οικειοις, οικεταις· ει προς παντας σοι μεχρι νυν εγι το μητε τινα ειξαι εξαισιον, μητε ειπειν.—M. ANTON. *lib.* 5.

priests on earth, ye shall instantly resume these characters, but with infinitely greater dignity and splendour in the world above.

Ye *Mistresses*, do ye concur with the partner of your cares and joys in all his active and generous concern for the welfare of your families? Does the happiness of your offspring and your servants, in this world and in that to come, lie near your hearts? Do you bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Do you endeavour to sow the early seeds of piety in their breasts? Do you counsel, encourage, and reprove them? Do you weep over them, and pray for them? Is it your wish to mingle simplicity with prudence, gentleness with authority, and cheerfulness with seriousness, in all your deportment? Be assured ye shall by and by rest from your labours, and your works shall follow you. There are mansions preparing for you above, and therein shall you be everlastingly happy.

Ye *Children*, do you obey your parents in the Lord? Do you dwell together in unity? Do you meekly bear with one another, tenderly sympathize with one another, and cordially assist one another? Is it your wish to make some recompense to those whose anxious care has led you up into life, by copying after the holy examples they have set you? And is this your filial piety cherished and improved by a prevailing sense in your breasts of the duty you owe to your Father in heaven? Be assured, ye shall at death be received again to your parents' embraces, and with them enjoy domestic pleasures in their highest perfection.

Ye *Servants*, whom Providence hath directed to these pious houses, that you might receive a new and divine life: have you from the noblest motives ministered to them who have ministered to you? Have humility, faithfulness, diligence, and cheerfulness marked your conduct; reflected credit on your Christian profession; and entitled you to the friendship of those you have served? Be assured that *of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ* a.

The public walk of life affords innumerable occasions of self-examination and trial. But would men bring their tempers and conduct to the tests which domestic intercourses furnish, these would, methinks, suffice to throw a light upon their real charac-

a Col. iii. 24.

ters. Is all that sweet peace, that smiling content, that tender sympathy, that generous friendship which prevails in a virtuous family congenial to your soul? Do you prefer the instructive and entertaining discourse that perfumes the tabernacles of the righteous, above all the boasted joys that abound in the tents of sin? With cordial pleasure do you unite with the excellent of the earth in their returning exercises of devotion? In fine, is a name and a place in such a house as this more envied by you than the most shining stations in the courts of princes? No doubt then, you are related to the happy family above, mansions are preparing there for your reception, and angels are waiting to conduct you to your long wished for home.—To close the whole,

3. And lastly. Let us express our gratitude to the great Author of all these our glorious hopes, in every possible way that duty and love dictate.

How vast, how immense, how inconceivable is the love of God! He made us reasonable beings. He formed us for the duties and pleasures of social life. He established domestic connections. He bound us to himself and one another by bands the most firm and endearing. But ah! pride and rebellion tore these bands asunder. The Author of our happiness abandoned the mansion he had built. Sin with all her deformed and wretched train entered. And in the dwelling where the opposite graces had sweetly reigned, strife, envy, discontent, malevolence, and misery displayed their horrors.—But oh! amazing grace! the Father of mercies pitied us. He sent his Son to vindicate the rights of justice, to extirpate Satan from the seat he had usurped, and to restore harmony and love to the habitations his Spirit had deserted. The Prince of peace arrayed himself in mortal flesh; and wept, and bled, and died, to compass these great ends. His object he has attained. Families emerge from the ruins of human apostacy, recover in a degree even here their original simplicity, beauty, and glory, and by and by acquire their utmost height of splendour and perfection in the world above. What amazing grace is this! Rejoice, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! Let every bosom that receives these tidings, exult with joy!

But amidst the joy we feel, let us not lose sight of those returns of duty which this unexampled grace demands. There

are many ways of expressing our gratitude, and this of a cheerful persevering attention to domestic duties is not the least. Have we thrown open the doors of our hearts, and hailed the King of glory to his residence there? Let us consecrate our houses also to his service. Let the fragrant incense of prayer and praise daily ascend to Heaven. Let all our actions, intercourses, and pleasures be regulated by his will. And to his honour let our knowledge, substance, influence, example, and all be devoted. So shall we have the refined, ecstatic, godlike pleasure of forwarding the great and good design the Father of mercies has adopted, even that of rescuing our children, servants, and connections from impending ruin; forming them for the several stations they are to fill in life; and introducing them at length to the unutterable joys of heaven.

END OF DISCOURSES ON DOMESTIC DUTIES.

DISCOURSES

ON THE

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

"Take heed how ye hear."—JESUS CHRIST.

DISCOURSE I.

OF PARABLES IN GENERAL: AND THE LEADING IDEAS OF THIS IN PARTICULAR.

MATT. XIII. 3—9.—*And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side; and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

OUR divine Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, possessed the qualifications of a prophet in their highest perfection. No one ever taught like him: he spake with authority, not as the scribes. Sensible, however, that his instructions could have no salutary effect unless duly received, he earnestly exhorted the multitude who attended his ministry to take heed HOW they heard. And to assist them in this great duty, he lays open, in the parable before us, the principles, motives, and conduct of the various sorts of persons who hear the gospel.

Our Saviour was constant and unwearied in the discharge of the duties of his prophetic character. On the morning of the day this parable was delivered, he had reproved the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, warning them of the tremendous consequences it would draw after it. And having retired for a while to a house for some refreshment, he went down to the sea of Galilee; and there entering into a ship sat on the side of it,

and from thence discoursed to a great multitude gathered together on the shore to hear him. They were plain country-people, and so it is probable, well acquainted with husbandry. He therefore talks to them in their own language, presenting them with divine truth in a form easy to be understood, and adapted to please.

But here a difficulty occurs which will require a little consideration. The disciples, when our Lord had finished his discourse, ask him, why he spake to the people in parables. He replies, ver. 13. quoting a passage from Isaiah, *Because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand a.* From whence it should seem, that our Lord himself considered the form of speech he had used as obscure, and that he adopted it in displeasure at their unreasonable stupidity and unbelief. And how is this to be reconciled with our idea of the parable, as easy to be understood and adapted to please? I answer—This mode of instruction is certainly natural and proper. We often introduce similes into our discourse, to explain and illustrate what could not otherwise be so clearly comprehended. But then if a parabolical relation be given, without any intimation of the matter to which it is to be applied, it must be uninteresting, and the intention of the speaker remain obscure. Now, it is admitted, our Lord did not in so many words declare what was the point he had in view. Yet, had his hearers been attentive, and made a proper use of their reason, they could not have been at a loss to apprehend in general his meaning. It was not probable that one who claimed the character of a prophet, and had wrought so many miracles before their eyes, should have nothing further in view than to amuse them with a tale of what often happens to husbandmen in sowing their ground. On the contrary, it was reasonable for them to conclude from his discourse previous to this, from the woes he had denounced upon their leaders for their inattention and unbelief, and from what he added at the close of the parable, *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* I say it was most reasonable for them to conclude from hence, that he meant to hold up to their view moral and divine truth. Which being the case, how natural for them to suppose, that by the sower's sowing seed,

a Chap. vi. 9.

was meant our Saviour's instructing men in the great concerns of religion, and by the effect of the seeds being sown, the various influence of his instructions upon their minds. It is also further to be observed, that our Lord's putting the question to his disciples, *Know ye not this parable?* plainly intimates, that whatever obscurity there was in the parable, it was possible for them to understand the general meaning of it: and therefore, if it had not been for the depravity of these people's hearts, it would have been possible for them also to understand it. But although a further explanation of it was necessary, his forbearing to give it was but a just expression of his displeasure at their treatment of the plain truths he had delivered to them on the morning of that day: and so they were naturally led to read their crime in their punishment. Upon the whole, therefore, it must be acknowledged, the general intent of the parable being apprehended, that the method our Saviour took to lay open the characters of his hearers, was most fit, natural, and easy.

Here it will be proper to inquire more particularly into the grounds and reasons of this mode of instruction, that we may be enabled to account for our Saviour's frequent use of parables, that we may be assisted in the interpreting them, and that we may be guarded against the wanton abuse of allegory, too common among some people in discourses on religious subjects.

The word *Parable*, as appears from its derivation, signifies a similitude or comparison. It is sometimes applied to an apologue or fable, that is, a story contrived to teach some moral truth: and sometimes it is put for a proverb, which is a parabolical representation comprised in a short sentence. This mode of instruction is familiar and pleasant. Sensible objects may very properly be considered as images of spiritual and invisible things; and by this use of them we are assisted in our conceptions and reasonings about matters, of which we should otherwise have scarce any idea at all, by substituting one person in the room of another; or by relating a story apposite to our purpose, we are enabled to place certain characters and actions in a striking point of light, and to treat them with a freedom which in a plain direct address would scarcely be reconcileable with prudence and delicacy.

The advantages accruing from this mode of instruction, wisely managed, are so considerable that it has obtained by universal consent in all ages. It was used by the ancient prophets, the eastern sages, and the Jewish doctors. And it is obvious that our Saviour had various inducements to this practice. Beside the consideration that it added beauty and vigour to his discourses, and rendered them more agreeable to a people accustomed to this manner of speaking, it enabled him to throw a veil over some things which it was not fit to declare in express terms. Many events were to take place which, in the ordinary course of things, would have been obstructed had our Lord openly and plainly foretold them; such as his being put to death by the Jews, the destruction of their polity and worship, and the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. And then, as to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the full explanation of them being reserved, for wise purposes, to the preaching of the apostles, this parabolical mode of instruction was the fittest to convey that degree of light concerning them, which was judged most proper during the term of our Saviour's own personal ministry. Hence he tells his disciples a little before his last sufferings, *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs* (or parables): *the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father* a. From what has been said then we clearly see why our Saviour so generally taught the people in parables.

Now as the parables were intended for our instruction, as well as theirs to whom they were first delivered, it is of importance that we, as well as they, rightly understand them. To this end give me leave to lay down two or three rules to assist us in the interpretation of them.

1. The first and principal one I shall mention is, the carefully attending to the occasion of them.

No one, for instance, can be at a loss to explain the parable of the prodigal son, who considers that our Lord had been discoursing with publicans and sinners, and that the proud and self-righteous Pharisees had taken offence at his conduct. With this key we are let into the true secret of this beautiful parable, and cannot mistake in our comment upon it. With

a John xvi. 25.

inimitable softness and compassion our Saviour encourages the hopes of the penitent sinner, by describing the tender pity of a venerable parent towards an undutiful child. And with admirable address he reproves the invidious temper of Pharisaical professors, by representing the jealousy and disgust of the elder brother at the kind reception the younger met with. Understanding thus from the occasion of the parable what is the grand truth or duty meant to be inculcated,

2. Our attention should be steadily fixed to that object.

If we suffer ourselves to be diverted from it by dwelling too minutely upon the circumstances of the parable, the end proposed by him who spake it will be defeated, and the whole involved in obscurity. For it is much the same here as in considering a fine painting: a comprehensive view of the whole will have a happy and striking effect, but that effect will not be felt, if the eye is held to detached parts of the picture, without regarding the relation they bear to the rest. Were a man to spend a whole hour on the circumstances of the ring and the robe in the parable just referred to, or on the twopence in that of the good Samaritan, it is highly probable both he and his hearers, by the time they got to the close of the discourse, would lose all idea of our Saviour's more immediate intent in both those instructive parables. And it should be farther observed, that the dwelling thus tediously upon the mere circumstances of a parable, sometimes proves a temptation to obtrude on the hearer such fanciful interpretations of them, as have no warrant for them either in reason or Scripture. Which leads me to add,

3. That great caution should be observed in our reasoning from the parables to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity.

The principal or leading idea of a parable is, I admit, a sufficient ground on which to establish a doctrine: but this is not always the case with a detached part of it. In discourses of this nature circumstances must be introduced to make up the story, and to give consistency and harmony to it: but there is no reason in supposing that a mystery is couched under each of these circumstances. The parable of Dives and Lazarus clearly proves, in my opinion, the existence of a separate state, since, if this be not admitted, I am at a loss how to give a con-

sistent meaning to it, and under the necessity of supposing that our Lord countenanced a popular notion which had no foundation in truth. But, on the contrary, were I, upon the mere circumstance of Dives' expressing a concern that his brethren came not into that place of torment, to establish such a position as this, that there is benevolence among damned spirits, I should reason very improperly. I mean not however by this to say, that no attention is to be paid to what may be called the tints or colouring of a parable. Lights and shades have their effect, and our Lord might intend by relating little incidents, yea, even by the very turn of an expression, to convey some useful lesson to the mind. But then, as we should be on our guard that we are not diverted from the grand object by these matters, so we should take heed how we raise upon them a superstructure which they are not able to support. Such imprudent treatment of the parables by inconsiderate people has contributed not a little to scepticism, and created doubts in some minds, whether doctrines thus unskilfully defended have any other foundation than in mere imagination.

And now from what has been said, we see, in general, the importance of carefully guarding against an intemperate use of figure and allegory, in discourses on moral and religious subjects. But this is a matter that requires a little further consideration.

We have already admitted that a figurative mode of speech is allowable, and sometimes absolutely necessary. Our ideas most of them originate from sensation. By comparing the various orders of material beings with one another, we come to understand their distinguishing properties: and by comparing the objects of faith with those of sense, if the analogy is properly observed, we are assisted in our reasoning about them. And every one is sensible how much a discourse is embellished and enlivened by figurative language. We mean not therefore to condemn the use of metaphors and similitudes, but only to correct the abuse of them. And what occasion there is for an attempt of this kind, none can be ignorant, who consider the manner in which public preaching is conducted in many popular assemblies.

It is lamentable to think what multitudes of weak people are

imposed upon in this way. Their imagination is amused, and their passions excited, at the expense of their understanding and judgment, which are miserably trifled with, and too often grossly perverted. Figures we shall hear applied to what they bear no resemblance to, or at most but a very obscure and imperfect one. Metaphors of the lowest kind, if not indecent, we shall hear poured out in great abundance; a whole discourse filled with them, and sometimes a favourite one twisted and turned to any or every purpose without sense or reason. The doctrine of types shall be treated with the greatest freedom, as if no bounds were to be affixed to a wild imagination, and the preacher were at liberty to impose his own conceits on all the circumstances of the Jewish ritual. That shall be made a type which is none, and where there is one it shall be stretched beyond its true meaning. The very outlines of a shadow shall become the foundation of some important doctrine. Scripture histories shall be converted into allegories, the common actions and intercourses of the patriarchs and others, assume the air of mystery, and even the geography of the Old Testament have a spiritual meaning given it. And thus the Bible shall be made to say, in an infinite variety of forms, what no man of common sense can believe it ever meant to say.

And now we are upon the subject of public preaching, it may not be amiss to add, that this mystical treatment of Scripture is not the only evil we have to complain of. The pulpit is too often disgraced with a kind of language, action, and manner of address, better suited to the familiarity of the market or fireside, yea, in some instances, to the drollery of the stage, than the gravity of a Christian assembly. Sermons shall become vehicles, not only of trifling puerilities, quaint conceits, and fantastic allusions, but of idle stories, some true and some false. At every step the preacher advances, you shall have some image held up to view, taken from common life, dressed in an antic form, and adapted, as it should seem, rather to disturb than to excite devotion. Or if this be not his aim, but on the contrary his object is to make some truth or duty familiar to his hearers, yet the means defeat the end: for the substance is lost amidst the people's attention to the shadow, and so much time is taken up about the images of things,

that little is left to investigate the real nature of the things themselves.

Now, one cannot help wondering what should induce men, who have any pretensions to sense or seriousness, to adopt a mode of preaching so trifling, indecent, and pernicious. Charity forbids our supposing that they mean to burlesque religion: if however they did, they could not take more effectual measures to that end. But we will rather impute the evil to less offensive causes, such as indolence, a fondness for popularity, or a wild conceit that by these means they shall be likely to allure people to the consideration of divine things.

That this is an easy mode of preaching and requires no great labour or ingenuity, is not to be doubted. A man of a slender capacity, with a little natural elocution and a good deal of courage, may easily enough descant for a while upon this or that trite metaphor, making its several qualities stand for something he has no clear idea of, and knows not how to express in plain language; especially if he has the talent of digressing when occasion requires, and of mingling with his discourse a variety of tales, some ludicrous, and others serious. And thus possessed of the art of preaching, pray why should he throw away his time in laborious researches into nature, the word of God, and his own heart? Why should he spend his days and nights in close thought, diligent reading, severe inquiry, and a constant succession of painful exertions? Truly, if this mode of preaching were agreeable either to common sense or Scripture, he would be justified in forbearing such labour. But as this is not the case, it would surely be more for his own and the people's advantage, if he were less solicitous about his ease, and applied himself with greater anxiety to his duty. It is the plain language of the Bible, *Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine a. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth b.* Labour to get at the grounds and reasons of things; to explore their nature, uses, and effects; to state clearly the difference between good and evil; and thus to lead men step by step to the knowledge of God, Christ, themselves, their interest, duty, and final state.

a 1 Tim. iv. 13. b 2 Tim. ii. 15.

But it will be said, "An allegorical declamatory kind of preaching is most pleasing to the common people: and what harm is there in a man's wishing to be popular?" It is indeed to be feared too many hearers are more pleased with sounds than sense, with the shadow than the substance, the false glare of a bold image than the striking energy of truth. They are more disposed to take things for granted, on the bold assertion of the preacher, than to inquire into the grounds upon which they stand. They feel no weariness in hearing a loose unconnected unmeaning harangue, but their spirits are quickly jaded by an attention to close reasoning. In short, so their fancy is pleased and their passions moved, they care not what becomes of their understanding and judgment. This, I say, is the character of too many hearers. But must we accommodate ourselves to such a depraved taste, in order to draw the multitude after us? Is this manly? Is this honest? Is this treating either them or ourselves as we ought? Should we not rather take pains to correct their taste, and to convince them that religion is not a matter of amusement, but of the most serious consideration?

But you will say, "We mean to do them good, and what some consider as mere arts of persuasion may yet, if well timed, have a good effect. The taking men in their own way, adopting their familiar language, surprising them now and then with a bold figure, a sudden turn of thought, a sally of wit, a pleasant tale, or a group of frightful images; all this may succeed and catch their attention, excite their passions, and so gain their good will." True, they may. But having got your point, what good have you done them? If the business is to stop here, no time being left for the sober discussion of some important truth, and a serious address to the conscience, how is the great end of preaching answered? Your audience is neither wiser nor better. And the great mischief is, too many mistake the pleasurable or painful feelings, which are the mere mechanical effect of your thus practising on their ears and their imagination, for religious impressions. They have been amused and delighted, or surprised and set a wondering, and so instantly conclude they are converted. I am not objecting against an easy pleasant delivery, occasional sallies of imagination, or a temperate use of metaphors, nor am I pleading for a dull, scholastic, systematical

treatment of divine truth. But the former extreme is, I think, far more dangerous than the latter, as we shall presently shew.

"Well but," say you, "is not an allegorical mode of preaching scriptural? Did not the prophets, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, deal much in parables?" True, they did. Nor are we forbid the use of similitudes: they are on many occasions highly proper and useful; and if you manage them to advantage, and in the manner the inspired writers did, you will find this mode of preaching to be of all others the most difficult. A sensible, judicious, profitable treatment of a parable or figure will cost you a great deal of previous thought and study. Nor do I know a better expedient to deter a wild allegorist from the extravagance we have been exclaiming against, than to oblige him to spend a few hours in adjusting, if he can, all the circumstances of a parable, so as that it shall agree with itself, and carry clear conviction on the minds of plain hearers. The parables which occur in sacred writ, and particularly those of our Saviour, are most clear, beautiful, and striking. Their excellence lies in the happy union you here see between wisdom and simplicity. Preach after this manner, and all wise and good men will wish you God-speed. But I should here again remind you of what was observed in the beginning of this discourse, that our Lord had particular reasons for speaking so frequently in parables, and that after his ascension, when the veil was taken off the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, another mode of instruction took place. The apostles, wherever they came, held up the truth in its most plain and simple form, represented things as they were, entering into their nature, qualities, connections, and evidence with no other assistance from figure and allegory, than was absolutely necessary. If this fact were duly weighed, I think it would check the luxuriance of some good men's imagination in this way, and bring them back to the standard of preaching in the New Testament.

With respect to those other liberties in preaching we have complained of, you will be apt to say, "Did not the prophets *cry aloud and not spare*, and *lift up their voices like a trumpet* [a]? Did they not *smite with their hands and stamp with their feet* [b]? and use many gestures and words, adapted to express

[a] Isa. lviii. 1. [b] Ezek. vi. 11.

the violent emotion of their own minds, and to excite similar feelings in their hearers? Did not our Saviour in the last and great day of the feast *stand and cry a?* and was there not a remarkable vehemence in the apostle Paul's manner of preaching?" All this is true. But it does by no means warrant what is indecent and unnatural, or indeed the expressing any earnestness at all, when nothing worth hearing is spoken. But admitting that there was something allegorical in the tone, gesture, and actions of the ancient prophets, as well as in their discourses themselves, and which might be justified by the peculiarity of the occasion and the extraordinary impulse they were under, it does not follow that their manner is to be imitated by us. And I am sure that there is not a single instance to be produced, from the New Testament, of any thing like those extravagances we protest against. Our Lord *stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* There was nothing in this language and manner but what was natural, and well agreed with the importance of his subject. And he was so far from being loud and vociferous, that it was prophesied of him, *He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets b.* And as to the apostle Paul, let his history be soberly read, and you will be convinced that his zeal, which was very warm, never got the better of his reason, so as to transport him into any of those gross indecencies we complain of.

And now there remains only one thing more to be noticed, which we hear sometimes urged by weak people as an excuse for the indiscreet liberties we wish to correct; and that is, that "this eccentric mode of preaching has been owned for the awakening and converting sinners." But before this argument can have any force, the fact itself should be fully established. Many have been supposed to be converted, whose after conduct has furnished sad proof to the contrary. Convictions have been mistaken for conversion, and a fit of warm enthusiastic zeal, attended with a temporary external reformation, has been deemed sufficient evidence of a renovation of heart. And thus a supposed fact, or what is rather wished than proved to be a fact, is instantly considered as an incontestible proof of the divine approbation of such preaching. But even admitting the fact, the

a John vii. 37. *b* Matt. xii. 19.—Isa. xlii. 2.

inference by no means follows. Very unworthy characters have been instruments of great good, and the unjustifiable extravagances of weak and inconsiderate men have been overruled by divine providence, in some instances, to very salutary purposes. There were those in the apostle's time who preached the gospel of strife and envy, and to add affliction to his bonds. And so disinterested was that great and good man, that he tells us, he nevertheless rejoiced, and would rejoice: thereby clearly intimating, that bad as these men's motives were, and improper as their manner might be of preaching the gospel, good might yet arise out of it. But surely the apostle did not mean to commend either their principles or mode of proceeding *a*. The truth is, having made up our mind upon the question what is right, or in other words, what is agreeable to sound sense and the word of God, it is our duty with all decency and steadiness to oppose the contrary, be the possible consequences thereof what they may. It is not the saying that foolish and extravagant preaching has been the occasion of real good to this or that man, that will justify such preaching. A few possible instances of this sort may indeed console our minds under the evil we are lamenting, but they will not, if we are wise and good men, reconcile us to it.

Having thus seen how it is men fall into this very improper and unnatural mode of discoursing of the great things of God, it is time to proceed to the main business, which is to point out the pernicious tendency of it. Here let me first speak of *allegorical*, and then of *declamatory* preaching.

As to the former, permit me again to observe that I do not mean to lay figures, comparisons, and similitudes under an interdict: they have their use if managed with discretion and moderation. But a failure here is an occasion of many great evils. —An intemperate use of figures tends to sensualize the mind, and deprave the taste—the misapplication of them gives a false idea of the objects they are meant to represent—and the reasoning injudiciously from them begets a kind of faith that is precarious and ineffectual.

1. An intemperate use of figures tends to sensualize the mind, and deprave the taste.

We complain, and very justly, that sensible objects engross

a Phil. i. 15—18.

the attention of mankind, and have an undue influence on their appetites and passions. They walk by sight, not by faith. They look to the things which are seen and are temporal, and not to those which are unseen and eternal. To the latter therefore we wish to direct their attention. And how is that to be done? Why, not, according to these preachers, by laying open their true nature, and representing them in plain language as they really are; but by arraying them in the fantastic dress, and borrowed colouring of those very objects with which we complain men are too conversant. Instead of developing mysteries, we multiply them. Instead of commending ourselves to every man's conscience by manifestation of the truth, we cast a tawdry veil over it. And instead of turning their eyes away from vanity, we direct them to it. A whole sermon, for example, should be taken up in describing a palace, a garden, or a city, with an intimation now and then that heaven is more beautiful and glorious than either of them. Or the whole time shall be employed in relating the incidents of a journey, or voyage, with a hint here and there that the character and condition of the Christian in his way to heaven are shadowed forth by these emblems. And thus the attention of the people being held the greater part of the discourse to objects of sense, they are more amused than instructed, and diverted than improved. Surely then the dealing thus largely in metaphors tends rather to impoverish than enrich the mind, to sensualize the heart rather than elevate it to heaven. And I ask, Is not this a great evil? The next evil we mentioned is,

2. The misapplication of figures, whereby false ideas are given the hearer of the things they are made to stand for.

It is easy to conceive how men's notions of the other world, invisible spirits, and the blessed God himself, may in this way be perverted. A licentious imagination has given rise to tenets the most absurd and impious. To this the idolatry of the pagan world may be traced up as its proper source. *Not knowing God, and glorifying him as God, but becoming vain in their imaginations, they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and so were given up to vile affections and a reprobate mind* [a]. And if men will

[a] Rom. i. 21, 23, 26, 28.

take unwarrantable liberties in discoursing of the nature and essence of God, if they will call in metaphors to their aid, in order to explain the manner of the divine subsistence, and will talk of that great Being with the same familiarity they do of their fellow-creatures; are they not chargeable with growing vain in their imaginations, and taking us a step back again towards the absurd notions and idolatrous practices of the pagans? Though they may not violate the second commandment, in the grossest sense, by making graven images of the Deity, they are yet guilty of a degree of impiety and profaneness.

To the same source, I mean that of a luxuriant fancy, may be referred the gross notions of the Mahometans respecting a future state. Their prophet, by the aid of a bold eastern imagination, has accommodated his doctrine to the sensual taste of his votaries, and so done infinite mischief in the world. And do not they act as if they meant to convert men to the religion of the false prophet, who can discourse of nothing in the Christian scheme but under the veil of mystery, though the gospel has taken away that veil, and taught us with open face to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord? Nor is it to be wondered at that men conceive erroneously of the operations of the Spirit, communion with God, the temptations of Satan, the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell; if these things are never discoursed of as they really are, but under images alike gross and sensual with those we meet with in the Koran.—Once more,

3. The reasoning injudiciously from types and figures begets a kind of faith that is precarious and ineffectual.

We have clear and positive proofs of the facts the gospel relates, and the important doctrines that are founded thereon. But if, instead of examining these proofs to the bottom, and reasoning with men upon them, we content ourselves with mere analogical evidence, and rest the issue of the question in debate upon fanciful and imaginary grounds; our faith will be continually wavering, and producing no substantial and abiding fruits. An enthusiast, struck with appearances, instantly yields his assent to a proposition, without considering at all the evidence. But as soon as his passions cool, and the false glare upon his imagination subsides, his faith dies away, and the fruit expect-

ed from it proves utterly abortive. To treat therefore divine truths after this manner, as if the direct and proper evidence were insufficient, is to do those truths great injustice, to affront the understanding of our hearers, and to injure them in their most important interests. The apostles wherever they came, soberly reasoned both with Jews and Gentiles, concerning the Messiah and his kingdom: with the former out of the Old Testament scriptures, which they admitted to be the word of God; and with the latter, from those principles of nature which they acknowledged to be divine. And in such manner should we discourse of the great truths of religion, first laying down those which are admitted on all hands, then reasoning from them to others by necessary consequence; and having established the divine authority of the Scriptures, proceed to prove by clear, direct, and positive evidence the doctrine therein contained. A faith thus generated in the minds of men will not fail, with the concurring energy of the Holy Spirit, to produce the fruits of love and obedience.

Thus have we pointed out some of the evils which unthinking people are in danger of suffering from allegorical preaching. But this is not all. Men of more refined understandings, and a sceptical turn of mind, are induced hereby to reject religion, and treat it with contempt. Suppose a man of this cast to go into a Christian assembly, and hear the plain histories of the Old Testament allegorized: as for instance, the falling of the borrowed axe into Jordan made to signify the apostacy of our first parents, and Elisha's causing it to swim, interpreted of our miraculous recovery by Christ; suppose him, I say, to hear a whole discourse thus managed, what would be the effect? He would perhaps conclude that this fanciful account of the doctrines meant to be inculcated, was the best proof the preacher could bring in support of them, and so would be confirmed in his infidelity: while sensible people, who do believe them, would be hurt to the last degree by the officious zeal of this inconsiderate expounder of Scripture.

So injurious to the cause of truth is this fanciful mode of interpreting Scripture, that a late virulent opposer of Christianity *a*

a Mr. Woolston in his "Moderator between an Infidel and an Apostate:" and his "Six Discourses on the Miracles of Christ."

insidiously adopted it, in order to bring the gospels of the four evangelists into contempt. Under pretence of zeal for his Bible, he tells us with a grave countenance, that the accounts of our Saviour's miracles are to be taken not literally, but mystically: so meaning to deprive us of one main evidence of the truth of Christianity, by bringing the reality of the miracles into question; and at the same time to raise a laugh upon Christians, as a company of credulous fools, ready to receive any interpretation of Scripture as genuine, which either ignorance or fancy may impose upon it. Sure I am, the real friends of Jesus would not like to rank with men of this cast: they, however, who treat Scripture in the manner we have been protesting against, must not be angry with us if we tell them, that they are gratifying, though undesignedly, the wishes of these men, and in effect helping forward the cause of infidelity.

A word or two now shall suffice for the evils attending *declamatory* preaching, by which I mean all discourses, whether allegorical or not, that are destitute of sober reasoning, and addressed merely to the passions; loose essays, or harangues on popular subjects, filled with trite observations, and set off with witty conceits and trifling stories, delivered in a manner more suitable to the stage than the pulpit. We have already observed, that such kind of preaching is by no means adapted to instruct and edify. But what I have here to add is, that its tendency is extremely pernicious. It begets contempt in those who are ill-affected to religion. It excites levity in those who are indifferent about it. It disgusts sensible and serious Christians. And, if any may be supposed to be awakened by it, such persons are in danger of mistaking impressions that are the effect of a mere mechanical influence upon their passions, for the work of God upon their hearts. And should not these evils be seriously considered by all who have unhappily fallen into this extravagant manner of preaching?

These are not trifling matters. The glory of God, the honour of religion, the welfare of immortal souls, and your own reputation, both as men and as ministers, are concerned. But alas! little is to be expected from these expostulations with weak and conceited people, and less with those who are governed in the exercise of their ministry by base and unworthy motives.

It is however to be hoped, that good men who may have been hastily precipitated by a lively imagination and a warm heart into this mode of treating divine things, will on sober reflection acknowledge that they may possibly be in an error, and that it is their duty to speak the word, as with all plainness, so with sobriety, wisdom, and reverence.

Upon the whole, let us, my brethren, be persuaded to consider well the infinite importance of the message with which we are intrusted to mankind, and how much the credit of religion and our real usefulness depend upon our delivering it in a proper manner. Let us form our preaching, not to the depraved taste of any set of people whatever, but after the model our divine Master and his apostles have set us. Let us first endeavour to inform men's understandings, and then to get at their consciences; always remembering that if these objects are not gained, the more we practise upon their passions, the greater real injury we do them. Let us, in the progress of our ministry, look well to our aims and views; ever making it our grand end to glorify God, and save the souls of men. And while in matters of indifference we become all things to all men, let us not forget what our Bible tells us, that *if we seek to please men, we are not the servants of Christ* [a]. And thus pursuing the line of duty which God has laid down in his word, and depending on the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit for success, let us assure ourselves our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

PART II.

We have considered the history of the parable before us, inquired into the grounds and reasons of this mode of instruction, mentioned the peculiar inducements our Saviour had to address the people in this manner, and laid down some rules to assist us in the interpretation of the parables. This has led me to observe the importance of carefully guarding against an intemperate use of metaphors, in discourses on moral and religious subjects; an evil which too much prevails in our time. This sort of preaching, and all preaching of a mere declamatory kind, whether allegorical or not, we have described; and shewn the false principles upon which it is adopted, and the very pernicious ten-

[a] Gal. i. 10.

dency of it. And we now return to the subject before us—the explanation and improvement of *the Parable of the Sower*. The general outlines of instruction meant to be conveyed by it, appear upon the face of the parable: we are happy, however, in having our Saviour's own interpretation of it, as we are hereby secured from the danger of mingling our own vain conceits with it. His exposition of it the evangelist has given us, ver. 18—23. which we shall now recite in his own words.

'Hear ye the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he which received seed by the way-side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.'

His audience, you see, our Saviour ranks under four distinct characters—the INATTENTIVE—the ENTHUSIASTIC—the WORLDLY-MINDED—and the SINCERE; each of which characters he draws with admirable precision and energy. And since most assemblies consist of persons who answer to these descriptions, we propose to consider particularly what our Lord has here said respecting each of them. But in order to open the way to this our grand object, it will be necessary to explain the principal leading ideas in the parable. These are *the Sower—the Seed—the Ground*—and *the Effect of casting the seed into it.*

I. By *the Sower* is meant our Saviour himself, and all those whose office it is to instruct men in the truths and duties of religion.

The business of the husbandman is of all others most important and necessary, requires much skill and attention, is painful and laborious, and yet not without pleasure and profit. A man of this profession ought to be well versed in agriculture, to un-

derstand the difference of soils, the various methods of cultivating the ground, the seed proper to be sown, the seasons for every kind of work; and, in short, how to avail himself of all circumstances that arise for the improvement of his farm. He should be patient of fatigue, inured to disappointment, and unwearied in his exertions. Every day will have its proper business. Now he will manure his ground, then plough it; now cast the seed into it, then harrow it; incessantly watch and weed it; and after many anxious cares, and, if a man of piety, many prayers to heaven, he will earnestly expect the approaching harvest. The time come, with a joyful eye he will behold the ears fully ripe bending to the hands of the reapers, put in the sickle, collect the sheaves, and bring home the precious grain to his garner.

Hence we may frame an idea of the character and duty of a Christian minister. He ought to be well skilled in divine knowledge, to have a competent acquaintance with the world and the human heart, to perceive clearly wherein the true interest of mankind consists, to have just apprehensions of the way of salvation, and to be rightly instructed in the various duties he has to inculcate. He should have an aptitude and ability to teach, and his bosom should burn with a flaming zeal for the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the welfare of immortal souls. He should, in fine, be endued with a humble, meek, patient, and persevering spirit.

Thus qualified for his work, he must *study to approve himself unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* a. He must consider well the character and condition of those he instructs, adapt himself to their various capacities, seize every favourable opportunity of getting at their hearts, and call in to his aid every possible argument to enforce divine truth. He must give to every one his portion in due season, milk to babes, and meat to strong men; and lead them on from one stage of instruction to another as they can bear it, initiating them in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and so bringing them forward to perfection. It must be his object now, by sounding the terrors of the divine law in their ears, to plough up the fallow-ground of men's

a 2 Tim. ii. 15.

hearts; and then, by proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel, to cast in the seeds of every Christian grace and virtue. He must be *instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering* a; put out his whole strength, be superior to every discouragement, and labour incessantly in his duty.

Pain and pleasure will attend all his exertions, and alternately affect his spirits. The different characters he has to deal with, and different impressions the word makes at different times; the various circumstances that arise to aid or obstruct his endeavours, and the various frames to which he is himself liable; these will all operate to create sometimes anxious fears, and at others the most pleasing expectations. Now we shall hear him with great sadness of heart complaining, *Who hath believed my report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed* b? and then, in the animated language of the apostle, *thanking God for that he hath caused him to triumph in Christ, and made manifest* by his labours *the savour of his knowledge in every place* c. Now we see him *go forth weeping, bearing precious seed:* and then *come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him* d. Such are the duties and labours, such the anxieties and hopes, such the disappointments and successes of those who preach the gospel, and who answer to the character of *the Sower* in our parable, who went forth to sow.

Of these sowers some have been more skilful, laborious, and successful than others. Among them the apostle Paul holds a distinguished rank. By his lips the gospel was published through a great part of the known world, and by his hands churches were planted in most of the cities and provinces of the Roman empire. And, thanks be to God! persons of this character have been raised up in every age, by whose means divine knowledge, with all the blessed fruits of it, has been propagated among mankind. But the most skilful and painful of all sowers was our Lord Jesus Christ. He, the Prince of prophets, the most illustrious of all teachers, spake the word with a clearness, affection, and authority that surpassed all who went before him, or have ever followed him.—This leads us,

a 2 Tim. iv. 2.
b Isa. liii. 1.
c 2 Cor. ii. 14.
d Psal. cxxvi. 6.

II. To consider *the Seed* sown, which our Saviour explains of *the word of the kingdom*, or, as Luke has it, *the word of God a.*

The husbandman will be careful to sow his ground with good seed. He goeth forth, says the psalmist, bearing *precious* seed —seed of such a nature as will produce, with the favour of divine providence, wholesome fruit—fruit that will nourish and strengthen those who partake of it. In like manner the word of the kingdom is precious seed—seed which will not fail, when sown in the heart, and cherished there by a divine influence, to produce wholesome and pleasant fruit.

By *the word of the kingdom* is meant the gospel, or the glad tidings of salvation by Christ. Our Saviour came to erect a *kingdom*, infinitely more happy, glorious, and durable than any that had ever flourished in our world. And whether we consider it in reference to *personal religion—the church*—or *a future state*, it exhibits to our view a most striking display of the majesty and benignity of God.—Let us apply it,

1. To *personal religion.*

In this sense it is used by our Saviour, when he exhorts his disciples *to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness b*; and it is this the apostle means, when, adopting the same figure, he tells us, *it is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost c.* In the heart of every real Christian a kingdom is established. This kingdom succeeds to one that had been torn to pieces by intestine broils and animosities: for such is the state of the mind while enslaved by sin and sense. But now Christ is the sovereign of it: he sways his sceptre over all the powers of the soul. Enlightened by his doctrine, and subdued by his grace, they all submit to his mild and equitable government. Peace, order, and good faith are restored to this little commonwealth. It confides in him, the Prince of Peace, as its redeemer and Saviour, enjoys its liberties under his influence and protection, and cordially acquiesces in his authority and laws. What a blessed revolution is this in the breast of every convert to religion! How many and great are the immunities to which such an one is entitled! A kingdom thus rising into existence, shall become more and more happy and glorious. And however it

a Chap. viii. 11. b Matt. vi. 33. c Rom. xiv. 17.

may sometimes be shook by the powers of darkness, it shall prevail against all opposition, and by and by attain to the greatest height of splendour and glory in the world above.

Now the seed sown in the hearts of men is *the word* of this kingdom, or that divine instruction which relates to the foundation, erection, principles, maxims, laws, immunities, government, present happiness, and future glory of this kingdom: all which we have contained in our Bibles. It is the doctrine of Christ—a doctrine which comprehends in it the whole system of divine truth, whereby we are taught our guilt, depravity, and misery, the grounds on which we are pardoned, justified, and saved, the nature and necessity of faith and repentance, the honours and privileges to which we are entitled as Christians, our duty to God, ourselves, and one another, the aids and influence of the Holy Spirit, and the glorious prospects of a future happy immortality.—Again, let us apply the idea of a *kingdom*,

2. To the *Christian dispensation*, or the whole visible church.

In this sense it is used by John the Baptist, *Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven*, that is, the gospel dispensation, *is at hand a*. All who profess the doctrine, and submit to the institutions of Christ, compose one body, of which he is the head, one kingdom, of which he is the sovereign—*a kingdom which*, he himself tells us, *is not of this world b*; established not upon the same principles, nor governed and defended after the same manner, as the kingdoms of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom, erected upon the ruins of the fall, and gradually rising to a kind of glory far surpassing that of the greatest empire on earth. Christ, though invisible to the human eye, reigns over it with uncontrolled authority, unerring wisdom, and infinite gentleness and love. And his subjects, who render cheerful allegiance to him, he not only protects and saves, but enriches with the best and noblest blessings.

And by *the word* of the kingdom, in this idea of it, is intended all the laws which Christ has instituted for the government of his church; and all the instructions he has given us respecting its worship, ordinances, discipline, protection, suf-

a Matt. iii. 2. b John xviii. 36.

ferings, increase, and final glory. Once more, the term *kingdom* is to be understood also,

3. Of *heaven*, and all the happiness and glory to be enjoyed there.

So it is used by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount, where he assures those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, that *theirs is the kingdom of heaven a*; and in another place, *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom b.* The splendour of this kingdom exceeds all description and imagination. *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him c.* In heaven, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, means, ere long, to collect together all his faithful subjects from the most remote parts of his empire; to make one grand exhibition to their astonished sight of the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty; to unveil his infinite excellencies to their view, after a manner the present state will not admit of; and to entertain them with joys the most refined, satisfying, and eternal.

Now the gospel is *the word* of this kingdom, as it has assured us upon the most certain grounds of its reality, and given us the amplest description of its glories our present imperfect faculties are capable of receiving. *Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel d.* And *God, of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away e.* Thus we have the sum of that doctrine which the ministers of Christ are instructed to publish to the world, and which is *the seed* the sower went forth to sow.—Hence we proceed,

III. To consider the *Ground* into which the seed is cast, by which our Saviour intends the *soul* of man, that is, the understanding, judgment, memory, will, and affections.

The ground, I mean the earth on which we tread, is now in a different state from what it was in the beginning; the curse of God having been denounced upon it *f*. In like manner the

a Matt. v. 10. *b* Luke xii. 32. *c* 1 Cor. ii. 9.
d 2 Tim. i. 10. *e* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. *f* Gen. iii. 17.

soul of man, in consequence of the apostacy of our first parents, is enervated, polluted, and depraved. This is true of every individual of the human race. It is a fact sufficiently attested by experience, and plainly asserted in Scripture: *God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions a. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned b. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one c. There is none righteous, no not one; they are all gone out of the way d. The Scripture hath concluded all under sin e.* Of the nature, extent, and dreadful effects of this miserable depravity, we shall have frequent occasion to speak hereafter. It shall suffice at present to observe, that as there is a variety in the soil of different countries, and as the ground in some places is less favourable for cultivation than in others; so it is in regard of the soul. There is a difference in the strength, vigour, and extent of men's natural faculties; nor can it be denied that the moral powers of the soul are corrupted in some, through sinful indulgences, to a greater degree than in others.

As to mental abilities, who is not struck with the prodigious disparity observable among mankind in this respect? Here we see one of a clear understanding, a lively imagination, a sound judgment, a retentive memory; and there another remarkably deficient in each of these excellencies, if not wholly destitute of them all. These are gifts distributed among mankind in various portions. But none possess them in that perfection they were enjoyed by our first ancestors in their primeval state. On the contrary, they are reduced, even in the most shining characters, to a very humiliating degree beneath the original standard. So that it is true of all mankind, that they are at best weak and fallible, especially in regard of the great concerns of religion.

But it is with the moral powers of the soul we are here chiefly concerned. There is in every man, previous to his being renewed by the grace of God, a prevailing aversion to what is holy and good; and a strong propensity to what is sinful and pernicious. *The carnal mind*, as the apostle tells us, *is enmity against God;*

a Eccl. vii. 29. *b* Rom. v. 12. *c* Job xiv. 4.
d Rom. iii. 10, 12. *e* Gal. iii. 22.

for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be a. But then this depravity, which is universal, is capable of being heightened and increased. This is too often the case. Repeated acts of sin confirm vicious habits, and render them unconquerable; and men, having a long while boldly resisted the dictates of natural conscience and the persuasions of religion, are at length given up to blindness of eyes and hardness of heart. In such cases they answer to that striking description of the apostle, where he speaks of them as *ground which bearing thorns and briers, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned b.* But there are some who, though partakers with others of the general depravity, are yet of a nature more tender and flexible; and though they have the seeds of all sin in their hearts, yet their growth having been checked by early instructions and the restraints of divine grace, the soil may be said to be more favourable for cultivation than that just described.

This view of the matter receives confirmation from the different account our Saviour gives of the several kinds of ground in which the good seed was sown. That which was stony, by reason of the thin mould cast over it, was more favourable for the reception of the seed than the beaten path by the way-side; and that in the hedges, than the stony places. Yet neither of these soils, though somewhat different from each other, could bring forth fruit to perfection without cultivation. Nor do we mean to say, whatever difference there may be in the natural tempers of persons, or however they may be assisted and improved by education and the ordinary restraints of Providence, that they will any of them bring forth good fruit without the effectual influence of renewing grace. The ground must be first made good, and then it will be fruitful. So our Saviour says, *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit c.* But of this we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter.—It remains that we now,

IV. Consider the general *Process* of this business, as it is either expressly described, or plainly intimated in the parable.

a Rom. viii. 7. *b* Heb. vi. 8. *c* Matt. xii. 33.

The ground, first manured and made good, is laid open by the plough; the seed is cast into it; the earth is thrown over it; in the bosom of the earth it remains a while; at length mingling with it, it gradually expands, shoots up through the clods, rises into the stalk, and then the ear; so ripens, and at the appointed time brings forth fruit. Such is the wonderful process of vegetation. Nor can we advert thus generally to these particulars, without taking into view at once the exertions of the husbandman, the mutual operation of the seed and the earth on each other, and the seasonable influence of the sun and the rain under the direction and benediction of divine Providence.

So in regard of the great business of religion: the hearts of men are first disposed to listen to the instructions of God's word; these instructions are then, like the seed, received into the understanding, will, and affections; and after a while, having had their due operation there, bring forth in various degrees the acceptable fruits of love and obedience. And how natural in this case, as in the former, while we are considering the rise and progress of religion in the soul, to advert, agreeable to the figure in the parable, to the happy concurrence of a divine influence with the great truths of the gospel dispensed by ministers, and with the reasonings of the mind and heart about them. To shut out all idea here of such influence would be as absurd as to exclude the influence of the atmosphere and sun from any concern in culture and vegetation. Let the husbandman lay what manure he will on barren ground, it can produce no change in the temperature of it, unless it thoroughly penetrates it, and kindly mingles with it; and this it cannot do without the assistance of the falling dew and rain, and the genial heat of the sun. In like manner, all attempts, however proper in themselves, to change the hearts of men, and to dispose them to a cordial reception of divine truths, will be vain without the concurrence of almighty grace. Of Lydia it is said, *the Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul* a. And it is God, the apostle tells us, *that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure* b. Nor can the seed, though cast into the most favourable soil, expand, shoot up, and ripen into fruit, without a concurrence of the same influence which

a Acts xvi. 14. b Phil. ii. 13.

rendered cultivation in the first instance effectual. Suppose the sun no more to rise, and the dews no more to fall, there would be a total end to vegetation, the seed would perish in the clods, and the earth cease to bring forth her fruits. And so it would be in the religious world, were the influences of divine grace totally suspended.

And now, upon this view of the matter, how great the absurdity, as well as impiety of excluding the operations of the Holy Spirit from all concern in the renovation of the heart! If we may reason by analogy from the works of nature to those of grace, this reflection must strike us in the most forcible manner. It is true our Saviour does not, in his explanation of the parable, say any thing expressly of the influences of the Spirit. But the doctrine itself, which he elsewhere asserts in the clearest terms, is founded in the principle of the parable; and so interwoven with its very frame and contexture, that to deny the former, is in effect to destroy the latter. What man in his senses can suppose, that in the account our Lord here gives of sowing, he meant to affirm that the sun and the weather have no concern in the success of this business? How absurd then to imagine that in a discourse, wherein he represents by this figure of husbandry the effect of his gospel on the minds of his hearers, he had no regard at all to the exertion of a divine influence in order to render it effectual! Could he who every where taught that all nature is full of God, and that there is not a spire of grass that does not owe its vegetation to an almighty energy; could he, I say, be indifferent to so sublime and reasonable a doctrine as that of the sovereign control and influence of the Deity on the hearts of men?

To object the difficulty of conceiving how this influence is exerted to the existence of the fact itself, is to plunge ourselves into a greater and still more inextricable difficulty; I mean that of shutting out God both from the natural and moral world, and placing blind chance and the will of a mere creature on the throne of supreme omnipotence. But the Scriptures every where assert in plain words what our Saviour in this parable takes for granted. He himself tells us, that *except a man is born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven:* and at the same time replies to Nicodemus's objection, *How can*

these things be?—by saying, *the wind bloweth where it listeth, and no man knows whence it comes, and whither it goes, so is every one that is born of the Spirit a.* The evangelist John affirms, that *they who become the sons of God, and believe on the name of Christ, are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* The apostle Paul declares, *we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works b,* and that *he hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost: which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour c.* And the apostle James assures us, that *God of his own will begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures d.* But these are only a few among many other passages of the same import.

Thus have we considered the leading ideas in the parable of the sower—*the Seed*—*the Ground*—and the gradual *Process* of this business, from the first cultivation of the soil, and the casting the seed into it, to the happy issue of the whole in the production of fruit at harvest. And these ideas we have applied to the origin, progress, and effect of religion in the heart and life of a real Christian. So our way is open to the consideration of the several characters our Saviour means to hold up to our view, which will be the subject of the following discourses. In the meantime, let us make a few reflections on what has been said.

1. How honourable, important, and laborious is the employment of ministers!

Our business, my brethren, is with the immortal souls of men, to plough up the fallow ground of the heart, to cast in the seed of truth, and all with a view to their bringing forth the fruits of holiness. Can any service be more interesting, or more painful and pleasant than this? What fervent zeal, what tender pity, what persevering resolution should inspire our breasts! Let us get all the knowledge we can in our profession, let us be expert in all the duties of it, let us have our hearts in it, and put out all our strength in the labours of it. Let us be instant in season, and out of season, watch for the souls of men as those that must give an account, and seize every favourable opportunity that offers of promoting the great objects of God's glory and

a John iii. 5, 8. *b* Eph. ii. 10. *c* Tit. iii. 5, 6. *d* James i. 18.

their salvation. We must expect, like the husbandman, to meet with our disappointments, and many will be our anxieties and sorrows. But let us not be unduly cast down: though we sow in tears, we shall ere long reap in joy.

2. What a great blessing is the word of God!

It is more precious far than the seed with which the husbandman sows his ground. With this we are begotten by the will of God, that we may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Divine knowledge, entering into our understandings, and mingling with our experience, makes us wise unto salvation, cheers and enlivens our hearts, and disposes us to every good word and work. O how attentively therefore should we read the word of God! how diligently should we endeavour to understand it! how implicitly submit our judgment and conscience to its authority! how cordially embrace its sacred truths! and how regularly and constantly govern our lives by its precepts! *To this good word of God, brethren, we commend you, (persuaded that) it is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified a.*

3. What cause have we for deep humiliation before God, when we reflect on the miserable depravity of human nature!

The earth has evident signs of the curse of God upon it. Thorns and thistles it brings forth, and in sorrow and in the sweat of our face we eat of it till we return into the ground *b*. In like manner the soul of man is wretchedly dishonoured, enervated, and corrupted by sin. The soil that was originally rich, pure, and flourishing, and brought forth fruit spontaneously, has lost its beauty and verdure, is become cold and barren; and till it is manured and cultivated by divine grace, produces little else but bitter herbs and noxious plants. What have we then, in this our apostate state, to boast of? *God created man in uprightness, but he hath sought out many inventions c.* The gold is become dim, the fine gold is changed. Let us therefore humbly prostrate ourselves before God, and in the language of the patriarch Job say, *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes d.*—In a word,

a Acts xx. 32.
b Gen. iii. 17—19.
c Eccl. vii. 29.
d Job xlii. 5, 6.

4. And lastly, How great are our obligations to divine grace for the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit!

If the barren soil of our hearts has been cultivated, if the seed of divine truth has been cast into it, if the dews from the everlasting hills have copiously descended on it, if the balmy influence of the blessed Spirit has warmed it, caused the living principles of grace implanted there to dilate, spring up, and bring forth the fruits of holiness; if, I say, God of his mercy has taken such measures as these with us, how devoutly should we acknowledge his goodness! Let not the regard which the sower pays to divine Providence, reproach our inattention and insensibility to the more noble and salutary influences of divine grace. These let us earnestly implore, and in these let us humbly confide. And ere long our shouts of praise to the great Author of all grace, shall far exceed those of the grateful husbandman to the God of nature, when he brings home the precious grain to his garner.

DISCOURSE II.

THE CHARACTER OF INATTENTIVE HEARERS CONSIDERED.

MATT. XIII. 4.—*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured them up.*

WE have explained at large the leading ideas in this parable, and proceed now to consider the several kinds of *Hearers* our Lord meant to describe. Their characters are drawn with admirable precision, and will furnish us with many useful lessons of instruction. They may be all classed under four heads —the INATTENTIVE—the ENTHUSIASTIC—the WORLDLY-MINDED—the SINCERE. It is upon the first of these we are now to discourse.

FIRST.—The INATTENTIVE, or those upon whose minds the word has no salutary effect at all.

When the Sower casts abroad his seed, some fall on the path lying through the field, or on that without the enclosure, the way-side, or causey: and so the ground being common, uncultivated, and grown hard by being frequently trod on, it is incapable of receiving the seed into it. Here therefore it lies, and is either bruised and destroyed by the feet of him who next passes that way; or else the fowls of the air, birds of prey, quickly come and devour it. How natural the description!

Let us now hear our Saviour's exposition of this part of the parable. *When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he who received seed by the way-side.*—Here several things are to be observed; as,

1. These persons *hear* the word. They are not deaf, and so utterly incapable of hearing. Nor are they determined at all events that they will not hear. This is the deplorable character of too many people. They fly from the word of God and the means of religion, as they would, from the pestilence. They refuse him that speaketh, that is, will not so much as give him a hearing. No consideration can prevail on them to enter the places where the gospel is preached. And when God in his providence calls aloud to them, they reply, as did the Jews of whom the prophet Jeremiah speaks, *I will not hear: and this is their manner from their youth* a. But the persons here meant to be described do hear. So far their conduct is commendable.—But then,

2. They are only *occasional* hearers of the word. They are, in regard of the assemblies where the gospel is preached, what the way-side is to the field where the seed is sown, ground without the enclosure, or whereon the seed falls as it were accidentally, or by chance. They come now and then to the house of God, induced by motives of curiosity and amusement, or others more base and unworthy. But admitting that in compliance with custom, education, or at best, the constraints of conscience, they attend more regularly; yet,

3. They are *not at all prepared* for hearing the word. The ground *by the way-side* is beaten ground; it has received no

a Chap. xxii. 21.

cultivation whatever. 'Keep thy foot,' says the wise man, 'when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools *a*.' We ought to consider before hand what we are about, to look well to our views and motives, and to endeavour to compose our minds to the solemnities of divine service. But to these exercises of the heart the persons we are here speaking of are perfect strangers. They rush into the presence of Almighty God as the horse into the battle, without any awe of that great Being upon their spirits, and without any concern to profit by what they hear. And hence it may be presumed,

4. That they hear *in a heedless*, desultory *manner*. Their attention is not fixed, their thoughts are not collected, they regard not the drift of the discourse, observe not the connexion, nor comprehend the reasoning. And so,

5. They *understand it not*, that is, they remain grossly ignorant. Not that they are destitute of the powers of perception and reasoning, in a state of absolute idiocy or insanity. No; they have common sense, and it may be, a great deal of natural sprightliness and sagacity. But not using the faculties they are endowed with, not listening to what they hear, and not taking pains to apprehend and retain it; they only affix some general idea to this or that passing sentence: and so are as uninformed as if they did not hear at all. But there are some in the class of hearers our Lord here describes, who

6. Do *in a sense* understand the word; for the seed is said, in the latter part of the verse, to be sown *in their hearts*. Now these persons hear with more attention, but, alas! to no better purpose, than the others: for their attention being the fruit of mere curiosity, all the knowledge they acquire in religion, is merely speculative. And of this they have, perhaps, not a little, insomuch that they think themselves qualified to be teachers of others. But with all their systematical acquaintance with doctrines, all their knowledge of technical terms, all their nice distinctions, and their profound metaphysical reasonings, they are miserably ignorant of what lies at the foundation of religion. They know not their own hearts, they perceive not the evil of sin, they apprehend not the danger to which they are exposed,

a Eccl. v, 1.

they have no just ideas of their need of Christ and his salvation, and of the beauty and excellence of true holiness. They hold the truth in unrighteousness; a great deal of error is mixed with it; or if their notions are just, yet there is one grand truth of which they have no conception at all, and that is the infinite importance of these things. And so these persons may be said *not to understand* the word of the kingdom.—But if they do in a sense understand it, yet,

7. It *makes not any abiding impression* on the heart. The seed, as Luke expresses it, was *trodden down*, and that instantly, by the next passenger. So divine instructions are treated by these persons with contempt, or at best, with indifference. They are not laid up in the memory and seriously considered and reflected upon, but are quickly forgotten and lost. These hearers of the word 'are like unto a man that beholdeth his natural face in a glass, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was *a*.'—And this leads us to what is principally observable in the text, and that is,

8. And lastly, Our Saviour's account of *the manner in which these impressions are effaced*, and all their salutary effect defeated. 'The fowls of the air came and devoured the seed,' which had thus fallen on the way-side, or beaten path; which our Lord explains of 'the wicked one's coming and catching away that which was sown in the hearts' of them that heard, lest, as Luke adds, 'they should believe, and be saved.'—Here three things are to be considered,

I. Who this *wicked one* is, and why he is so called.

II. What is meant by his *catching away the seed*, and how this is done. And,

III. What is the malevolent end proposed—*that they might not believe, and be saved.*

I. Who is this *wicked one*, and why is he so called?

The wicked one is Satan, as Mark expresses it *b*; and the devil, as Luke has it *c*. To deny that such a spirit *can* exist, merely because our eyes do not behold him, is most unreasonable, and in effect to deny the being of God himself. And to deny that he actually *does* exist, is to deny the truth of the Scriptures. But I am not here debating with either atheists or

a James i. 23, 24. *b* Chap. iv. 15. *c* Chap. viii. 12.

deists. It is admitted that there is such an one as Satan, or the devil.

Now, for our account of him we must be indebted to the Bible. And what does that tell us concerning him? It tells us that he is the chief and leader of that numerous host of angels which waged war against heaven, and for their rebellion were driven thence into the mansions of the damned, where they *are reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day* a. He is endowed with powers which far transcend those of mankind; and these, stimulated by unsufferable pride and desperate malevolence, are exerted with all possible energy to oppose the counsels of God and the interests of men. Hence he is called *Satan*, that is, the adversary; and the *devil*, that is, the accuser. It was he that seduced our first parents from their allegiance to Heaven, and so introduced sin and death into our world: where, having thus set up his standard, he still exercises his usurped authority. He is *the prince of this world* b, *the prince of the power of the air* c. It was he that solicited the destruction of the patriarch Job *d*. It was he that *stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people* e. It was he who by becoming *a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets*, persuaded Ahab to fight with the Syrian king to his ruin *f*. It was he that *stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest to resist him* g. It was he, in fine, that tempted our Saviour in the wilderness, most virulently opposed his ministry, and was the chief actor in the last sad catastrophe of his sufferings and death.

Wicked men, styled in Scripture the children of the devil, are *his ministers*; sometimes openly executing his commands, and at others, like their master, who *transforms himself into an angel of light*, assuming the character of *ministers of righteousness* h. *So, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders*, he propagates through our world error, vice, and discord, with a long train of the most tremendous evils *i*. And so this once peaceful and pleasant spot is become an *aceldama*, a field of blood. Horrid monster! to thy influence all the calamities our

a Jude 6. b John xiv. 30. c Eph. ii. 2.
d Chap. i. 6—ult. ii. 1—7. e 1 Chron. xxi. 1. f 2 Chron. xviii. 20, 21.
g Zech. iii. 1, 2. h 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15. i 2 Thess. ii. 8, 9.

eyes behold and our hearts lament, are to be traced back; and upon thy devoted head it is fit the wrath of incensed justice, and the curse of injured innocence, should fall.

Further, he not only carries on his designs by instruments employed to that end, but has himself access to the hearts of men; and though he cannot force them to act against their will, yet he knows how by a thousand arts to catch their intention, play upon their imagination, inflame their desires, and rouse their passions. He, 'the god of this world, blinds the minds of them who believe not *a*;' 'works in the children of disobedience *b*;' 'put it into the heart of Judas to betray' his Master *c*; 'fills the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost *d*;' lays *snares* for some, in order to *lead* them *captive e*; and 'walks about, like a roaring lion, to devour' others *f*; *beguiles* the former *through his subtilty*, using a variety of *wiles* and *devices*, in order 'to get advantage against them *g*;' and violently assaults the latter, now by *his messengers buffeting* them, and then discharging *his fiery darts* at them *h*. In fine, he, 'the old serpent called the devil and Satan, deceiveth the whole world *i*;' and having so done, 'accuseth them before God day and night *k*.'

From this short scriptural account of Satan, it appears with what propriety he is here, and in many other passages, styled emphatically *the wicked one*. He is wicked himself in the highest degree, for as he exceeds all others in subtilty and power, so also in impiety and sin: a spirit the most proud, false, envious, turbulent, and malignant among all the various orders of fallen spirits. He too is the author of all wickedness, the contriver and promoter of every species of iniquity. Whence the infinitely numerous evils that prevail in our world are called 'the works of the devil *l*.' Such is the character of this first apostate archangel, the grand, avowed enemy of God and man.—And thus are we led to our second inquiry,

a 2 Cor. iv. 4. *b* Eph. ii. 2. *c* John xiii. 2.
d Acts v. 3. *e* 2 Tim. ii. 26. *f* 1 Pet. v. 8.
g 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14.—Eph. vi. 11.—2 Cor. ii. 11.
h 2 Cor. xii. 7.—Eph. vi. 16. *i* Rev. xii. 9. *k* Rev. xii. 10.
l 1 John iii. 8.

II. What is meant by his *catching away the seed*; and how this is done?

Immediately (as Mark has it *a*,) upon the seeds falling on the ground, 'the fowls of the air came and devoured them up.' So, as our Saviour interprets this circumstance, 'the wicked one cometh, and catcheth away the word of the kingdom that hath been sown,' or hath loosely fallen *on the hearts* of those just now described.

'When the sons of God,' as we read in the story of Job, 'came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord *b*.' In like manner, wherever the gospel is preached, he watches his opportunity to prevent the due effect of the word upon those who hear it. To give a physical account of the manner in which he exerts his influence to that end, is not my business. It is enough to observe, that if we have modes of communicating our ideas to one another, and of exercising the powers of persuasion over the minds and passions of men, there is no absurdity in supposing that Satan, though not clothed in a human body, or visible to a natural eye, may have access to the heart. And the language of our Saviour is so directly and strongly to the point, that it is scarce possible to give it a meaning that can any way justify a denial of the fact. If it were downright enthusiasm to suppose that Satan can have any intercourse with the human mind, how is it imaginable that our Lord, who was a clear decisive reasoner upon every subject, would expressly tell us, in the explanation of the parable, and without the least caution to beware of misinterpreting him, that 'the wicked one cometh and catcheth away the word from the heart?' He spoke to plain people, and did not mean to ensnare them with enigmatic or figurative language. Besides, the opinion that then prevailed of the influence of Satan in our world was so general, that if there had been no ground for the fact, such language as this in our text, and in those other passages just cited, where Satan is said to have put it into the heart of Judas to betray his master; to have filled the heart of Ananias to lie unto the Holy Ghost; and to work in the children of disobedience; such language, I say, could not in that case be

a Chap. iv. 15. *b* Job i. 6. ii. 1.

excused of the charge of disingenuity and a disposition to temporize.

No doubt the doctrine I am defending has been abused by enthusiasts, on the one hand, and impostors on the other. But if men would attend to the calm dictates of reason and Scripture, they would be in no danger from either of these quarters. For no more is meant by the influence which Satan is supposed in certain cases to exert over the mind, than what is similar to the influence which wicked men are acknowledged to have over others; to allure them by persuasions to sin, and to dissuade them by menaces from their duty. It cannot force them into sin, against the consent of their will; or, in other words, so operate on their minds as to deprive them of that freedom which is necessary to constitute them accountable creatures. And in no case is it exerted but by the permission and under the control of an infinitely superior being.—To return:

This mighty adversary watches his opportunity to prevent the salutary effect of the word upon those that hear it. And considering what is the character of the sort of hearers we are here speaking of, it is not to be wondered at that he is permitted to catch away the seed sown in their hearts, or that he succeeds in the attempt. For if their motives in attending upon divine service are base and unworthy, if they address themselves to the duties of religion without any previous preparation, if they hear in a careless desultory manner, and if prejudices against the truth are cherished rather than opposed, all which, as we have seen, is the case; how righteous is it in God to permit Satan to use every possible artifice to defeat the great and good ends to which religious instructions are directed! Here then let us consider what these artifices are, at the same time remembering that they take effect, and can only do so, by falling in with the false reasonings and perverse dispositions of those on whom they are practised. How does Satan "catch away the good seed from the heart?" That is our inquiry. I answer—by *diverting men's attention from the word* while they are hearing it, or while they seem to hear it—by *exciting prejudices against it*—and by *preventing their recollecting it* afterwards.

1. Satan uses his utmost endeavours *to divert men's attention from the word* while they are hearing it.

The utility and, indeed, necessity of attention, in order to our reaping advantage from the word, is evident at first view. How is it possible that I should understand what another says, and so be benefited by it, if I do not listen to him? Nor will my hearing a word now and then, or catching a sentence as it passes, do me any material good. We must apply with seriousness, affection, and earnestness, if we will comprehend the reasoning of the speaker, and feel the force of his persuasions. *Hoc age*, said the Roman crier to the people, when the priest led them on to sacrifice. So we must be all attention, or the service will be unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to ourselves.

Now, a great variety of circumstances may and often do concur, to divert the mind from what ought to be its only object on these occasions. And where there is no resolution, or even wish to resist these temptations, it is easy to see how they will operate to prevent all salutary effect from the word. The man I here mean to describe, not caring at all whether he is profited by what is said, will not fail to be haunted with a thousand vain and perhaps criminal thoughts and passions. Now, the person, voice, attitude, and manner of the preacher, shall wholly occupy his attention; and if there be any thing singular in them, excite disgust or pleasantry. And then his eye shall be caught by the audience, the place where they are assembled, and particularly the countenance, dress, and demeanour of this or that person who sits near him. And so an infinite multitude of idle ridiculous ideas shall crowd in upon his mind, and like so many demons, take possession of his depraved imagination. Or if his attention is not arrested by surrounding objects, the businesses and amusements of life, with all their perplexing anxieties and fascinating desires, shall captivate his thoughts, and create a long train of reveries, from which, even if he were disposed, he would find it difficult to extricate himself. And thus, while the 'wisdom of divine truth is before him that hath understanding, the fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth *a*.' There are few assemblies which do not furnish some striking examples of such criminal inattention—here one quietly composing himself to sleep, and there another indecently gazing

a Prov. xvii. 24.

on all around him. And I fear the hearts of the generality of hearers, could we enter into them, would exhibit the sad scene we have been describing in its full force; a torrent of wild, unconnected, trifling thoughts pouring in upon the mind, without even the feeble fence of one sober consideration or reflection to resist it.

Thus does Satan "catch away the seed" from hearts indisposed to receive it. He tempts, and they fall in with the temptation. He plays upon the imagination by surrounding objects, or by impertinent ideas suggested to the mind, and they are pleased with what they little suspect to be the artifice of this subtle adversary. Instead of watching each avenue of the soul, they throw open the door to every vile intruder, and revel in the most wanton and dissipated company, while they are supposed to be sitting attentively at the feet of divine instruction. So this mighty enemy sets up his standard in their bosoms, and bids defiance to the counsels, reproofs, and expostulations of God's word. So he holds his miserable vassals fast in the chains of ignorance and unbelief. And so they go away from the house of God as uninformed, unaffected, and unimproved as they came thither.

How lamentable the case of these hearers! But however stupid they remain for a while, conscience will by and by rouse, and do its office. The day is coming when this sad abuse of the means of religion will be recollected with pungent griefs. They will 'mourn at the last,' to use the words of Solomon, 'when their flesh and their body are consumed; and they will say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me? I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and the assembly *a*.'

2. Satan uses every art to excite and inflame men's prejudices against the word they hear.

Pride and pleasure are passions that predominate in the human heart: whatever therefore opposes them must needs be irksome, and cannot gain admission to the mind without many painful struggles. Now the gospel stands directly opposed to these criminal passions. It brings indeed glad tidings of great joy,

a Prov. v. 11—14.

and is accompanied with sufficient evidence. But then it teaches the most humiliating and self-denying truths,—that we are all miserably ignorant, guilty, and depraved; that we are wholly indebted for our hope of escaping the wrath to come, and acquiring the happiness of heaven, to the free grace of God through the mediation of Christ; that we must humbly renounce all merit at the feet of divine mercy, and *submit ourselves to the righteousness of God* a. It teaches that, as it is most reasonable we should exert every power in the pursuit of heavenly blessings, so *it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure* b, and that it is *by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God* c. And it further teaches, that if we will be the disciples of Christ, we must *deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow him;* must prefer intellectual and spiritual to carnal and sensual pleasures, renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, and in the painful discipline of the heart, and patient submission to trouble, adhere to our divine Master and his interest to the end. Such is the word of the kingdom, to which there is a deep-rooted aversion in the hearts of men; an aversion so confirmed in some by the indulgence of criminal passions, that it is almost unconquerable.

Now, in order to prevent a person's becoming a convert to religion, if he is not to be dissuaded from frequenting public worship, or if when there, his attention is not to be wholly diverted from the word by any of the artifices just mentioned; what is to be done? Why, an artful enemy, could he have access to the mind, would suggest all those ideas to it that are adapted to rouse that aversion to the gospel of which we have been speaking, and which, once roused, would not fail to indispose the mind to a calm and impartial attention to the reasoning of the preacher. He would address the passions of pride and pleasure in every possible way. He would make every imaginable circumstance tend to his purpose. He would give an unfavourable cast to the doctrine, person, abilities, views, voice, and attitude of the speaker; and to the character, sense, manners, and rank of his audience. These he would place in such a disgusting light as to provoke contempt, if not abhorrence.

a Rom. x. 3. b Phil. ii. 13. c Eph. ii. 8.

He would whisper in his ear such language as this:—"What! become a convert to a doctrine that affronts your reason and good sense, degrades you to the rank of brutes, yea, beneath it, makes you a mere machine, or at best tells you that you must be a fool for Christ's sake! Will you be a dupe to this idle declaimer, and a fellow disciple with these mad enthusiasts? Will you sacrifice all your just pretensions to wit, sense, and ingenuity, and all your prospects of honour, wealth, and pleasure? Will you be content to take your lot among a company of ill-natured conceited fools, or perhaps designing knaves, who monopolize the favour of heaven to themselves, and deal out their anathemas without mercy on all others? Will you be so lost to all refined reason and manly courage, as to become a snivelling penitent, a senseless devotee, a bigotted religionist? Will you tear yourself from all your former gay, cheerful, and respectable connections; part with a present certainty for the chimeras of futurity, and spend your remaining days in contempt, gloominess, and sorrow? If so, then listen to what these people say; implicitly believe their doctrine, and henceforth give yourself up tamely to the guidance of blind impulse and passion." Such would be the language of this artful deceiver.

That such thoughts have arisen in the minds of multitudes while the gospel has been soberly preached, and they upon the point of paying some attention to its reasonings and expostulations, can scarce be doubted. And why we should not admit that Satan may have an influence to suggest them, I know not. Of this, however, I am sure, that the language in our text looks strongly that way—*The wicked one cometh and catcheth away that which was sown in the heart.* But permit me again to observe, that these measures of the great adversary cannot succeed without the consent of the unhappy man on whom he practises them.—Once more,

3. Another artifice Satan uses to counteract the influence of God's word on men's hearts, is *to prevent their recollecting it* after they have heard it.

More depends upon the duty of recollection and self-application than men commonly apprehend. If indeed the end of preaching were only to rouse the passions by a blind kind of impulse, without the communication of any knowledge to the

mind, or the fixing any solid conviction on the judgment and conscience; I do not see what great good would result from recollection. In that case, all my business would be to recover those sensations of terror and astonishment, or of admiration and joy, which were created in my breast by the tone, gesture, and earnestness of the speaker. And what advantage it would be to me afterwards, any more than at the time of hearing, to possess these merely mechanical sensations, I am at a loss to say. But if the end of preaching is, by informing the understanding, and convincing the judgment, to make the heart better; then, upon the same principle that it is men's duty to hear the word attentively, and to endeavour, to the utmost of their power to comprehend it, it is their duty afterwards to recollect the ideas they got, and the impressions that were thereby made upon their affections, while they sat at the feet of instruction.

This would be, in a sense, hearing the word again, hearing it with double advantage, with abiding and substantial effect. The ideas thus revived, the sentiments thus familiarized, the reasoning thus digested, the sacred truths thus applied and brought home to the heart, would, with the blessing of God, produce not only similar feelings, but a further, increasing, effectual, permanent influence upon the temper and life. And indeed it is hard to conceive how a man's understanding should be informed, and his heart deeply impressed with what he has heard, and he not disposed to recover the remembrance of what has passed. Was there ever an instance of any one who received real benefit from a sermon, which he never thought of afterwards? All due allowance is to be made for the irretentiveness of some memories, and the peculiar unfavourableness of some person's situation and circumstances, to the duty I am recommending. But it is a duty most reasonable in itself, earnestly inculcated in Scripture; and if there were a hearty good-will to it, would be found to have fewer real obstructions to it than is commonly pretended.

Now, we will suppose a person to have heard the word, to have affixed some ideas to it, and to have received some transient impressions from it; in this case, what is to be done, in order to prevent its salutary effect? Satan is a more subtle artful enemy than is commonly apprehended. Perceiving this vassal of his on the point of revolting from his service, in a situation

far more hazardous than that of another whom he has influence enough to lull fast asleep under the loud calls of the gospel, or of one in whose breast he has address enough to excite those malignant prejudices mentioned under the former particular; perceiving, I say, this liege subject in danger of being torn from his dominion, he must have recourse to other artifices than those already used. And what more natural, what more likely to succeed, than those whereby the remembrance of what has been heard, may be erased, and the unhappy man thrown back into exactly the same situation he was before he entered the doors of such Christian assembly? Here various expedients offer, directly adapted to the purpose. And if I might be allowed to use figurative language, to give energy to this alarming subject, I would bring forward Satan to view in the most hideous form, issuing his commands to a legion of demons, to seize on this apprehended apostate from his kingdom, to rifle him of every serious thought that occupied his mind, and to bind him fast in the chains of thoughtlessness and dissipation.

If there be truth in religion, it is certainly the most important thing in the whole world. To the man therefore who begins to be persuaded by what he has heard, not only of the possibility, but the high probability of its truth, it is the language of common sense, as well as religion, "Go home, retire, call over the matters that have been discoursed of, weigh them in the impartial balance of consideration, search the Scriptures, inquire into your true character and state towards God, look forward to death and judgment, and address your fervent cries to heaven for mercy." Surely there is no enthusiasm in this. It is the language of calm and sober reason. In matters of far less importance than these, admonitions to reflection and consideration would be deemed prudent and salutary. But alas! the unhappy man of whom we are speaking, though struck by the reasoning of the preacher, as was Felix with the discourse of the apostle Paul, has not resolution to fall in with this advice so natural, reasonable, and beneficial. He has beheld himself for a moment in the mirror of truth, trembled at the deformity of his countenance, and faintly wished to take measures for the restoration of the health of his soul; but—O sad to think?—

he goes away, and forgets what manner of man he is. The soft syren persuasions of a deceitful heart, and a thousand surrounding snares, artfully laid by Satan for his ruin, prevail.

He has scarce left the assembly, where a solemn awe had seized his spirit, but some trifling object catches his imagination, sets all his passions afloat, banishes every serious sentiment from his breast, and precipitates him into his former state of levity and inconsideration. Instead of retiring silently to his own mansion, and there calling himself and his family to account upon the interesting concerns of religion; he is instantly seen in a circle of vain, thoughtless, giddy people, where the subjects of conversation are totally foreign to those which just now occupied his attention. News, dress, amusements, schemes of pleasure or business, or, to say the best, trifling remarks on the preacher, the audience, or some singularity in the behaviour of this or that person in the assembly; these are the topics of the evening, and thus is every serious impression erased, and all the benefit to be expected from public instruction entirely lost. Nor is it to be thought strange, the day thus closed without even the forms of religion, that the businesses and amusements of the succeeding week, should bury in utter oblivion the poor shadowy remains of a serious sentiment, or an heartless wish about God and another world.

Thus have we seen by what measures Satan catches away the good seed from the hearts of men—by *diverting their attention from the word* while hearing it—by *exciting prejudices in their breasts against it*—and by *preventing their seriously recollecting it* afterwards. So we are led to consider, in the third place, the malevolent end proposed thereby—"that they might not believe and be saved *a*." But this, with the improvement of the subject, we shall refer to the next opportunity.

PART II.

THE character of *Inattentive Hearers*, and the sad effect of their criminal indifference to the word, are the subjects now under consideration. 'Some seeds fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured them up *b*.' This figurative account of these unhappy persons is thus expounded by our

a Luke viii. 12. *b* Matt. xiii. 4.

Lord himself, (ver. 19.) 'When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he which received seed by the way-side.' We have explained the words, and made some general observations upon them. So we have proceeded to the main thing, which is, the consideration of the three following inquiries—Who *the wicked one* is, and why he is so called?—By what *arts* he endeavours to prevent the efficacy of God's word on the hearts of men?—And the malevolent *end* he proposes thereby? Satan, or the devil, is *the wicked one* here intended; and with what propriety he is so styled, appears, from the view we have taken of his character, history, and works. "He catcheth away the good seed of the word." This he does, we have shewn, "by diverting men's attention from it—exciting prejudices in their breasts against it—and preventing their recollecting it afterwards." We proceed now,

III. To consider the malevolent end proposed thereby—"lest they should believe and be saved *a*;" or, in other words, that they might still be held under the power of unbelief and sin, and so be lost for ever. Horrid cruelty.

Here, in order the more deeply to impress our minds with the importance of giving the most serious attention to the word, it will be proper to inquire what *faith* is—to describe the *salvation* promised to them who believe—and to shew you the *connexion* between the one and the other.

First—What is *faith?* I answer, it is a firm persuasion of the truth of the gospel, accompanied with a deep sense of its importance, and a cordial acceptance of its gracious proposals; and so producing the genuine fruits of love and obedience.

The term *believe* is of plain and easy import; so well understood that, in common discourse, no one pauses a moment to inquire what we mean by it. Nor is it imaginable, that the sacred writers use words in any other sense than is agreeable with their general acceptation: for if they did, the Bible would be a book absolutely unintelligible. It is however certain, that as the Scriptures assure us that he who believes shall be saved: so they speak of some who believe and yet are not saved.

a Luke viii. 12.

From whence it follows, either that the term itself has two different acceptations, or rather, that the faith of the one is accompanied with certain attributes or qualities different from that of the other: so that though they are both said to believe, their real characters are clearly and essentially distinguishable. Now, if we will spend a few moments in examining the definition of faith just given, we shall be enabled to draw the line between the mere nominal and genuine Christian, the man who believes to no valuable purpose, and him 'who believes to the saving of the soul *a*.'

The real Christian believes. But what does he believe? I answer, the pure unadulterated gospel; the sum and substance of which is this, that 'God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them *b*;' or, in other words, that, of his free mercy, for the sake alone of what Christ has done and suffered, he pardons, justifies, and saves the believing penitent sinner. This plain truth he clearly apprehends, though a stranger to a thousand curious questions that have been agitated about it.

But upon what ground does he believe the gospel? It is replied, the testimony of God. The external evidence of Christianity, I mean that of miracle and prophecy, strikes him, upon a general view of it, as clear and convincing. But if he has neither ability or leisure to enter so fully into it as others may have, yet that defect is supplied by the internal evidence of it, brought home to his own perception, reasoning, and experience. He sees it is a doctrine according to godliness, tending to make men holy and happy; and he finds that it has this effect, in a degree at least, on his own heart: and from thence he concludes that it is divine. And this I take to be *the witness* of which the apostle John speaks *c*: 'He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.'

It is natural further, as faith admits of degrees, to inquire what degree of assent he yields to the gospel? Not a faint, feeble, wavering assent, but a firm assent, agreeable to the clearness, strength, and energy of the evidence. He may indeed be assaulted with doubts, nor does he wish to suppress them by unlawful means, such as sound reason condemns. He is open

a Heb. x. 39. *b* 2 Cor. v. 19. *c* 1 John v. 10.

to inquiry, ever ready to follow where truth shall lead. But his doubts, having had in this case their full effect, serve rather in the end to confirm than weaken his faith: just like a tree, whose roots having taken fast hold on the ground, becomes firmer by being shaken of a mighty wind.

Again, the gospel which he thus believes, he believes also to be most important. It is not in his apprehension a trifling uninteresting matter. On the contrary, as it involves in it the most serious truths, which affect his well being both here and hereafter; so it rouses his attention, and calls all the powers of his soul into action. Like a man whose house is on fire, and is at his wits end till he has found means to extinguish it; or like one who has a large estate depending, and uses every effort to get his title to be confirmed; so he treats this gospel which he is persuaded is divine.

His belief too of the gospel is accompanied with a cordial approbation of its gracious proposals. He readily falls in with that scheme of salvation which divine wisdom has contrived, and almighty power has carried into effect. At the altar of propitiation he is disposed to sacrifice both pride and pleasure, and at the feet of the adorable Saviour *to cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God a.* While some, *ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness, he submits himself to the righteousness of God b.* And while others, under a pretence of doing honour to the free grace of God, throw the reins on the neck of their vicious inclinations, it is his object to be saved as well from the dominion of sin as the guilt of it. To the instructions of Jesus, the all-wise prophet of the church, he devoutly listens; on his sacrifice, as his great high priest, he firmly relies; and to his government, as his only rightful sovereign, he cheerfully yields obedience.—And from hence it may be naturally concluded, that the general course of his life is holy, useful, and ornamental.

In fine, upon this view of the matter, we clearly see with what propriety the Scriptures affirm, that 'they who believe on the name of Christ, are born of God c;' that 'faith is the gift

a 2 Cor. x. 5. b Rom. x. 3. c John i. 12, 13.

of God *a*:' that 'it is of the operation of God *b*;' and that 'it is given unto us in the behalf of Christ to believe on him *c*.' So that there appears good ground for the natural and usual distinction between a mere *historical* and a *divine* faith.

And now if we reverse what has been said, we shall plainly see the difference between the two characters of the real and the speculative Christian; and how it happens that the latter is said in Scripture to believe, though he believes not to the saving of his soul.

If it be inquired, then, of the man of this character, what it is he believes, it will perhaps be found that his idea of the gospel is a very mistaken one, or however that a great deal of error is mingled with the truth.

Or if this is not the case, and his notions are in general agreeable to Scripture, yet there is a defect in the grounds of his faith. It is not the result of impartial inquiry, and a serious regard to the authority of God; but of a concurrence of accidental circumstances. "The Christian religion is the religion of his country; he was born of Christian parents; his neighbours, friends, and relations are of this profession; and many good and learned men have told him, he may depend upon it the gospel is true." I mean not by this to insinuate, that these considerations may not properly create a presumptive evidence in favour of Christianity, and that they ought not to serve as inducements to further inquiry. But surely a faith that stands on this foundation alone, is not a divine faith, nor that faith to which the promise of salvation is so solemnly made in the New Testament.

Further, his assent to what he calls the gospel, though it may have in it all the obstinacy and tenaciousness of bigotry, is yet destitute of that manly firmness which is the result of free examination and full conviction. So that his creed, be it ever so orthodox, and his zeal for it ever so flaming, is after all, rather his opinion or sentiment, than the matter of his sober and serious belief.

And then in regard of that deep sense of the importance of divine truth which always accompanies a divine faith, he is a perfect stranger to it. His character is the reverse of that of the Thessalonians, *to whom the gospel came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost d.* It makes little other impression

a Eph. ii. 8. *b* Col. ii. 12. *c* Phil. i. 29. *d* 1 Thess. i. 5.

on his heart, than that a man receives from an idle tale he hears, and almost instantly forgets: unless, indeed, the eagerness and pride of party zeal happens, as was just observed, to create in his breast a warm and obstinate attachment to his profession.

To which it must be added, that however through various indirect causes or motives he is induced to assent to the gospel, he does not heartily fall in with its gracious proposals. He neither relies entirely on Christ as his Saviour, renouncing all merit of his own, nor yet cordially submits to his authority, approving of all his commands as most holy, just and good.—And from hence it is to be concluded that his external conduct, in regard of humility, meekness, temperance, benevolence, and the other Christian graces, hath little in it to distinguish him from the rest of mankind.

Thus have we contrasted the two characters of the real, and the merely nominal Christian; the man who believes to the saving of the soul, and him who, though he may be said to believe, yet believes not to any salutary or valuable purpose. And hence, I think, we may collect a just idea of the nature and properties of saving faith.

And now, let us examine ourselves upon this important question. We have heard the gospel; have we believed it? Have we received it in the love of it? And are our hearts and lives influenced and governed by it? We know not what true faith is, if the great concerns of religion do not strike us as infinitely more interesting and important than the most weighty affairs of the present life; if we do not feel and acknowledge our guilt, depravity, and weakness; if we do not most cheerfully intrust our everlasting concern to the hands of Jesus Christ, as our only Saviour and Friend; and if it is not our ardent desire to conform to his will, and to copy after his example, how deplorable will our condition be, should we at last be found in a state of unbelief and sin! But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak. There are many, I trust, among us who do believe in the sense of the New Testament. Give me leave, my friends, to congratulate you on your happiness; while at the same time I tenderly sympathize with those who are weak in faith; but who yet amidst

all their doubts and fears, join issue with him in the gospel, who *cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief* a.—Let us now from this account of faith go on,

SECONDLY,—To speak of the SALVATION promised to them that believe.

Here a scene the most delightful and transporting opens to our view; a scene, the contemplation of which in the present life, fills the Christian with admiration and wonder, but will overwhelm him with ecstasy and joy in the world to come. But we can only glance at it in this discourse. General, however, and imperfect as our account of it must be, it will serve to shew the indispensable necessity of faith, and of consequence, the importance of giving earnest heed to the things we hear, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Now this salvation, whether we consider it in reference to the evils we escape, or the opposite good to which we become entitled, is most glorious indeed. It infinitely surpasses every thing we read of in history. What was the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, their protection and support through the wilderness, and their conquest of Canaan, with the freedom, prosperity, and happiness they enjoyed there; what, I say, were these events, however splendid and miraculous, but imperfect shadows, faint preludes, of that great salvation wrought out for us by Jesus, the Son of God! It is a salvation from *moral*, *natural*, and *penal* evil in their utmost extent; and that followed with the enjoyment of positive blessedness in its highest perfection.

1. It is a salvation from *moral* evil.

The soul of man is the workmanship of God, and in its construction the skill and power of the great architect is wonderfully displayed. But alas! this temple of the living God, once honoured with his presence, is now laid in ruins. Sin, with a long train of miseries, has entered the heart, and taken possession of it. It has darkened the understanding, perverted the judgment, enslaved the will, and polluted the affections. It has dethroned reason, brought a load of guilt upon the conscience, created a thousand painful anxieties and fears in the breast, and spread universal anarchy through the soul.

Now, from all these evils we are saved by our Lord Jesus

a Mark ix. 24.

Christ. He procures for us the free pardon of our sins, reinstates us upon equitable grounds in the favour of our offended Sovereign, and sends down his good Spirit into our hearts, to renew our nature, and make us meet for heaven. His doctrine illuminates the benighted mind, restores peace to the troubled conscience, gives a new bent to the will, and directs the passions to their proper objects. What a blessed change is this! But the salvation thus begun arrives not at perfection in the present life. Light and darkness, faith and unbelief, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, are here blended together. And hence the errors, follies, and sins which the best of men are chargeable with, and which they so pungently lament at the feet of divine mercy.

Death, however, the friend, not the enemy of the believer, shall set the captive soul at liberty, and restore the immortal spirit to its primitive rectitude and purity. At that happy moment the Christian shall be freed from all remains of ignorance, imperfection, and sin. No evil thought, no vain imagination, no irregular desire shall ever any more afflict his heart, or disturb his devotion. His intellectual faculties shall become capable of the noblest exertions, and his affections be unalterably fixed to the Supreme Good. The image of the blessed God shall be fully delineated on his soul, and in the contemplation and fruition of that great Being, he shall be employed to all eternity. Thus the salvation, begun here in sadness and sorrow, shall be finally completed in everlasting happiness and glory.—Again,

2. It is a salvation from *natural* evil.

Many and great are the miseries of an outward kind to which human nature is liable in the present life. This is a fact not to be denied; proofs arise from every quarter. If we look into the histories of former times, we shall find the greater part of them employed in relating the calamities which have befallen nations and public bodies of men, the ravages of war, and the devastations occasioned by fire, tempest, earthquake, pestilence, and famine. If we go abroad into the world among the various orders of mankind, our attention will every now and then be arrested, and our sympathetic feelings excited, by scenes of distress too painful to be particularly described—families sinking into all the wretchedness of poverty—parents following their only children to the grave—widows pouring their unavailing

tears over their helpless offspring—here a friend deprived of his reason and his liberty, and there another languishing on a bed of sickness and death. No wonder these and many other calamities we are the witnesses of, cast a gloom over our countenances, and imbitter our pleasantest enjoyments. And then, if we consider our own frame, the materials of which these tabernacles are composed, the disastrous accidents we are subject to, those harbingers of death, sickness, and pain, which are continually advancing towards us, and death itself, with the many distressing circumstances that often accompany it; when, I say, we consider these things, we can hardly avoid crying out in the language of the afflicted patriarch, 'Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble *a*.'

Now, from all these miseries, the sad effects of sin, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save us. Not that good men are exempted from the common afflictions of life: poverty, sickness, and death they are liable to as well as others. But none of these calamities befal them in the manner they do the wicked. From curses they are converted into blessings, and for Christ's sake they become salutary chastisements, instead of vindictive judgments. If their heavenly Father corrects them, it is that they may be partakers of his holiness; nor does he fail to provide them with all needful supports under their afflictions. And they are assured, that however death, the greatest of all natural evils, is not to be avoided; yet it shall do them no harm. Nor are we without many glorious instances of those who, through the faith of the gospel, have triumphed over the king of terrors, while executing his last commission upon them. With the apostle, in the most heroic strains, they have thus challenged the last enemy,—*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ b.*

But let us extend our views to the heavenly world, where the promise of salvation, as it relates to natural evils, shall receive its full accomplishment. When the Israelites entered the good land, they ceased from their labours, and enjoyed all that tranquillity and happiness they had so long expected. In like man-

a Job xiv. 1. *b* 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

ner, *there remaineth* also *a rest to the people of God a.* When the journey of life is ended, there will be an end to all the pains, fatigues, and dangers of it. We shall no more endure any of those miseries we have been describing, or be the sad spectators of the sorrows and sufferings of others. In that happy world there is not one aching heart, not one weeping eye, not one complaining tongue. As the stones that composed the temple at Jerusalem were hewn and prepared before they were brought thither, that the noise of a hammer might not be heard throughout the building; so the painful exercises of the present life, whereby good men are made meet for heaven, having had their full effect, will for ever cease, and no sound will be heard there but the voice of joy and gladness. And on the morning of the resurrection, the body, roused from the slumbers of the grave, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ, shall be re-united to the immortal spirit, and in that happy union enjoy uninterrupted health and vigour to all eternity.—We have now only to add, in order to complete our account of this salvation, that it is

3. A deliverance also from *penal* evil.

Indeed the evils just described may very properly be denominated penal, as they are the effects of sin, and the expressions of the just displeasure of heaven against them. But what I have here in view is, the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked in the world to come, and the joys prepared for the righteous among the blessed above. It is but a general account we can now give of these two states; a transient glance, however, at the one and the other will suffice to convince us, that the salvation promised to them that believe, is infinitely great and glorious.

The Scriptures, in order to awaken the attention of mankind to their future and everlasting interests, have given us the most alarming description of the punishment prepared for the impenitent and ungodly. They assure us, that 'the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against them *b*;' that 'he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest upon them *c*;' that 'they shall be destroyed for ever *d*;' that 'they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and

a Heb. iv. 9. *b* Deut. xxix. 20. *c* Psal. xl. 5, 6. *d* Psal. xxxvii. 38.

be filled with their own devices *a*;' that 'they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt *b*;' that, 'not having brought forth good fruit, they shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire *c*;' that 'they shall be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth *d*;' and that 'they shall go away into everlasting punishment *e*.' These, and many other expressions of the like import, are meant to convey some idea to our minds of the extreme anguish of the damned; stript of all the comforts they here enjoyed and abused; shut up in the prison of hell, with spirits of the same fierce and malevolent dispositions as themselves; abandoned to the reproaches of their own self-accusing consciences; and oppressed with the most tremendous sense of the indignation of that great Being, whom they still continue to hate, but feel themselves utterly unable to resist. 'Who knoweth the power of thine anger, O Lord? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath *f*.' But from all these miseries, the deplorable effects of impenitence and unbelief, our great Emmanuel saves us. 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus *g*;' for 'he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us *h*.' But more than this—

To the miseries we have been describing, are to be opposed the joys and triumphs of heaven. The Christian at death, freed from all moral pollution, and restored to his primitive rectitude, as we have shewn under a former head, is admitted into the immediate presence of God, and the glorious society of the blessed. There he is ever employed in contemplating the divine excellencies in all their perfection, in beholding the adorable Jesus, his Saviour and Friend, in all his mediatorial glory, and in conversing with an innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect. And O, what tongue can describe, what imagination conceive, the transporting joys he feels resulting from the most intimate union with the great fountain of all good, and the most perfect sense of his favour and love impressed on his heart? 'In thy presence,' says David, 'is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore *i*.'

a Prov. i. 31. *b* Dan. xii. 2. *c* Matt. iii. 10.
d Matt. viii. 12. *e* Matt. xxv. 46. *f* Psal. xc. 11.
g Rom. viii. 1. *h* Gal. iii. 13. *i* Psal. xvi. 11.

Such then is the salvation promised to them that believe. O how should our hearts exult, while our ears are saluted with these blessed tidings!—guilt pardoned—innocence retrieved—the image of God restored—the powers of sin and death vanquished—soul and body made for ever happy and glorious—and all this effected at an expense that neither men nor angels can compute. But I forbear.—Some notice must now be taken,

THIRDLY,—Of the CONNEXION between faith and salvation. It is necessary, in order to our being saved, that we believe. Now this necessity arises out of the divine appointment, and the reason and nature of the thing.

1. It is the will of God, that those who are saved should believe.

His pleasure in this matter he has signified to us in language the most plain and decisive. *God so loved the world*, says our Lord to Nicodemus, *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life a.* And when he commands his apostles, as he was ascending up into heaven, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he adds, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned b.* The authority of the blessed God to dictate to us in any case, is unquestionable; but more especially in a matter so interesting to us as this, and in which the riches of his mercy and love are so wonderfully displayed. Nor is it a mere arbitrary command, but the result of infinite wisdom and goodness, as we shall presently see. In the mean time, it is to be remarked of many temporal salvations recorded in the Bible, which were presages of that more glorious one we are discoursing of, that they who were to be benefited by these extraordinary interpositions of divine providence, were required to believe. When the Israelites approached the Red Sea, under the most tremendous apprehensions of the event—mountains rising on either side of them, and an enraged enemy in their rear, Moses commands them *to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord c*, that is, to believe. When the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, for the healing those who had been bitten of the fiery-flying serpents, proclamation was made through the camp, that *whoever*

a John iii. 16. b Mark xvi. 16. c Exod. xiv. 13.

looked to it, that is, believed, should live *a*. And when Jehoshaphat led out his troops against a far more numerous host of enemies, assured that God would by a miraculous interposition subdue them, he commands the people, as Moses had done in the instance just mentioned, *to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*: adding, *Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper b.* Nor is it to be forgot, that our Lord Jesus Christ, when here on earth, required faith of them upon whose bodies he wrought miraculous cures; which cures afforded a lively emblem, and an happy omen, of those more noble cures his gospel is adapted to effect on the souls of men.—But,

2. There is a fitness or suitableness in faith to the end of its appointment, so that the necessity of it arises out of the nature of the thing itself.

If God of his infinite mercy is disposed to save us, and has assured us of this by a message from heaven, authenticated by the clearest evidence, it is no doubt our interest and duty to listen to the message, and give full credit to it. If he has sent no less a person than his own Son into the world to redeem us and make us happy, and if he possesses all necessary powers to accomplish that great and good design, it is surely most fit and reasonable that we should confide in him, and exercise all those regards towards him which his various characters and offices demand. No sober man who contemplates faith, accompanied with those dispositions and affections necessary to constitute a real Christian, can pronounce it an unreasonable and useless thing. But what I have here principally to observe is, that the great blessings of the gospel cannot be enjoyed without the medium of faith. It is true indeed, sin is atoned, Satan vanquished, and the gates of heaven opened to us, and all this by means we had no concern in devising or carrying into effect. But then the actual possession of the good thus procured for us, is as necessary as an equitable title to it. And how is that good to be possessed without a temper of heart suited to the enjoyment of it? And how is this temper to be acquired but by believing? Here I might shew you the concern which faith has in the conversion of a sinner to God, and in all those exercises of the

a Num. xxi. 8, 9. *b* 2 Chron. xx. 17, 20.

mind and heart whereby he is gradually prepared for the heavenly blessedness; at the same time observing, that neither faith itself, nor any of those pious affections or good works which spring from it, have any meritorious influence on his salvation. But our present design will not allow us to enter any further into this subject.

Thus have we considered the nature of faith, described the salvation promised to it, and shewn the connection between the one and the other. Let us now return to the argument in the text.

Satan clearly perceiving the influence of faith in the great business of salvation, and well knowing too that faith comes by hearing, uses all those artifices mentioned in the former sermon to divert men's attention from the word, and to prevent its salutary effect upon their hearts. *He catches it away, lest they should believe and be saved.* As in the beginning he seduced our first parents from their allegiance to God, in order to deprive them of the happiness they enjoyed, so he now uses his utmost endeavour to counteract the measures devised for the salvation of their posterity. Glad would he be to precipitate the whole human race into the same abyss of darkness and misery with himself; and no means within his power will he leave untried in order to compass his malevolent purpose.

Suffer me then, O ye careless hearers of the word, to remind you a moment of the awful consequences of that impenitence and unbelief in which he wishes to confirm you, by all the arts he uses to dissuade you from attention and consideration.

If ye will oppose the clear evidence of the gospel, and shut your ears against its loud calls and gracious invitations; if ye will listen to the false reasonings of him who was a liar from the beginning, and reject the salutary admonitions of Christ and his apostles; if ye will *tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing:* and if ye will, notwithstanding all the remonstrances of reason and conscience, *do despite unto the Spirit of grace*—ye must endure the punishment due to such accumulated guilt and horrid ingratitude. *There remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries* a. *The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven;*

a Heb. x. 26—31.

with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power a. Consider, O consider these things; and the Lord give you understanding.

It now remains that we make two or three reflections on the general subject of this discourse.

1. If Satan takes the measures you have heard to prevent the success of the gospel, and to confirm men in impenitence and unbelief, how truly is he denominated by our Saviour *the wicked one*, and how righteous is that sentence which will shortly be executed upon him.

Every step we have taken in our account of the methods by which he deludes that class of hearers we are discoursing of, establishes the evidence that has been deduced from Scripture of his malevolence. What can be more horridly cruel and malignant than to lay every possible snare to beguile the ignorant, and practise upon all the depraved passions of pride and pleasure to ruin the thoughtless; to throw every imaginable obstruction in the way of men's attending to their best interests, and excite in their breasts every unreasonable prejudice against the only means of salvation; and to pursue these measures uniformly in every age and country where the gospel is preached, flattering himself with the hope of alleviating his own misery by precipitating others into endless perdition! Yea, so determined is this miserable enemy upon carrying his infernal purposes into effect, that one of his machinations, and not the least, is, to persuade men that his existence is a mere chimera; or, however, if he does exist, that he has it not in his power to tempt them, and therefore is not chargeable with that guilt which entitles him to the denomination of *the wicked one*. What a monster of iniquity! If the character of a seducer among men is held in detestation, how much more detestable is the character of this arch-seducer! If it is the voice of all, that a murderer should not live, what tenfold vengeance is he deserving of who has been a murderer from the beginning, and has slain his thousands of thousands! Well, the day is coming when, *the devil who thus*

a 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

deceived the children of men shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and be tormented day and night for ever. And then shall be heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments a.

2. How much is it to be lamented, that men will suffer themselves to be deceived and ruined by the devices of this great adversary!

Permit us, O ye thoughtless inconsiderate hearers of the word, to expostulate with you a moment. The compassionate Jesus, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, has deigned himself to apprize you of your danger, and at the same time taken care to let you know, that, subtle and powerful as this enemy is he cannot carry his point without your consent. Your danger is great, and the rather as your nature is depraved, and you are surrounded with a thousand snares, of which Satan knows how to make his advantage. But do not excuse yourselves of blame, by pleading your incompetence to resist so mighty an adversary. To be tempted is not your sin, but it is your sin to comply with the temptation. You may—you can—you ought to be on your guard. Indisposed as you are to attend to your best interests, you are capable of hearing us, and of considering the force of our reasonings.

Why, O why will ye thrust all these things from your minds? Should what we say prove to be true, what an addition will it be to your misery to reflect, in the great day of account, that your heart despised reproof, and that you would not incline your ear to them that instructed you! Realize that day. Be persuaded that it will come. It is, however, not yet come. Now, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. The truths we preach may be painful to you, and to urge them upon you merely for the sake of giving you pain, would be cruel. But if the attentive consideration of them will be salutary to you, (and we firmly believe that such is their tendency) can you wonder that we are importunate with you? Make the trial. If you never before listened to a sermon, O be persuaded to listen to this! Carry it away with you; revolve it in your mind; examine what we have said by the tests of impartial reason and the sacred

a Rev. xix. 1, 2. xx. 10.

Scriptures. And, bowing your knee at the feet of the great God, earnestly beseech him, for Christ's sake, to assist you in your conflicts with this subtle adversary, and the deceitful reasonings of your own hearts. You have every imaginable encouragement so to do. And should you succeed, how glorious will your triumph be over sin and the powers of darkness!

3. And lastly, Let us admire and adore the grace of God which defeats the designs of Satan, and makes the word effectual upon the hearts of multitudes, notwithstanding all the opposition it meets with.

Many a one who has been induced to hear the gospel by motives of mere curiosity, has nevertheless received salutary and abiding impressions from it. He has entered the assembly with a thoughtless and dissipated mind, and has gone away with a heart deeply affected with his everlasting concerns. The providence of God in so disposing external circumstances as that such persons should hear the word, and the grace of God in setting it home with energy on their hearts, cannot be enough devoutly acknowledged and gratefully remembered. Nor is there an instance of any one savingly benefited by the instructions and invitations of the gospel, who will not readily admit the truth of what the apostle asserts, that as it is our duty *to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, so it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure* a. And how very pleasing to think, that, however in too many sad instances ministers have occasion to complain, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed* b? the day is hastening on, when an infinite multitude shall acknowledge with hosannas of the loudest praise, that the word of the kingdom, though treated by many with indifference and contempt, was the power of God to their everlasting salvation!

a Phil. ii. 12, 13. b Isa. liii. 1.

DISCOURSE III.

THE CHARACTER OF ENTHUSIASTIC HEARERS CONSIDERED.

MATT. XIII. 5, 6.—*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away.*

OUR Saviour's view in this parable is, to lay open the principles, motives, and conduct of the various sorts of persons who hear the gospel. The characters he draws are four—the INATTENTIVE—the ENTHUSIASTIC—the WORLDLY-MINDED—the SINCERE.—The first of these we have considered, we proceed now,

SECONDLY—to the ENTHUSIASTIC, or those upon whom to appearance the word has an instantaneous and mighty effect, but who yet reap no real advantage from it.

The temper and conduct of these persons are strikingly represented in the text, which our Saviour thus expounds: Ver. 20, 21. *He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.* Here are four things to be distinctly considered:

I. The character of these hearers previous to their hearing the word:

II. The effect it instantly produces on their minds;

III. Their failure afterwards: and,

IV. The cause of their apostacy. We begin,

I. With the character of these hearers previous to their hearing the word.

They are compared to *stony* or *rocky* ground *a*, which is unfavourable to cultivation; but yet has a *little* mould or *earth* cast

a Luke viii. 6.

over it, suited to receive seed, and in which it may lodge a while and disseminate itself. So that this ground is partly bad and partly good. And thus are very aptly described the miserably perverse and depraved state of the will, on the one hand, and the warmth and liveliness of the natural passions, on the other. These qualities often meet in one and the same person, and bear a different aspect to religion, the one being unfavourable and the other favourable to it.

1. It is true of these hearers that their will is wretchedly depraved.

Stone is a figure used in Scripture to signify the obstinate aversion of the mind to what is holy and good. So Ezekiel speaks of a *stony heart*, in opposition to a *heart of flesh a*; and Paul, of the living epistles of Christ being written not on *tables of stone* but *fleshly tables of the heart b*. There is in persons of this character a certain prejudice against serious religion, which perversely resists all reasonings, expostulations, and persuasions respecting it. *Their carnal minds are enmity against God, for they are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be c. Their words are stout against God d.* They say, *Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice e? What is the Almighty that we should serve him f? We will not have God to reign over us g. We will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart h.* Thus *they make their faces harder than a rock i*, and *their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law k. They are stiff-hearted, rebellious, and impudent l*; not only *alienated from the life of God*, but, in some instances, *past feeling m.*

What a miserable state of the human mind is this! Hearts thus set on iniquity, and thus unyielding to the dictates of conscience, providence, and the Scriptures, may well be compared to *stony*, flinty, *rocky* ground. There are indeed degrees of depravity, and some men through sinful indulgence become more stupid than others; so that *their consciences are* said to be *seared with a hot iron n.* But it is true of all, while in a natural state,

a Ezek. xxxvi. 26. b 2 Cor. iii. 3. c Rom. viii. 7.
d Mal. iii. 13. e Exod. v. 2. f Job xxi. 15.
g Luke xix. 14. h Jer. xviii. 12. i Jer. v. 3.
k Zech. vii. 12. l Ezek. ii. 3, 4. m Eph. iv. 18, 19.
n 1 Tim. iv. 2.

that their will is averse to that which is good. They do not with their mind serve God, and they will not come unto Christ that they may have life. Wherefore the figurative language of the text applies to the sort of hearers we are now discoursing of, in common with all others in an unrenewed state.—And yet, with all this depravity of the will, they have,

2. Warm and lively passions; a circumstance in itself not a little favourable to religion.

This is admirably expressed by the earth or mould said to be cast over the rock, which was of a nature so rich and luxuriant that the seed instantly mingled with it, and expanding sprung up, and created a beautiful verdure which promised great fruitfulness. Nothing was wanting to produce the desired effect, but a sufficient depth of earth. Had the ground at bottom been properly cultivated, this fine mould cast upon it would have assisted and forwarded vegetation: but that remaining hard and rocky, this had only a temporary effect, and served little other purpose than to deceive the expectation of the husbandman.

Such is truly the case in the matter before us. The heart, like the stony ground, is indisposed to what is good; and the affections, like the earth cast over it, are warm and lively: wherefore the word not entering into the former, and yet mingling with the latter, produces no real fruit, but only the gay and splendid appearance of an external profession. And here it is further to be remarked, that however the passions are of excellent use in religion, if the heart be right with God; yet, this not being the case, their influence is rather pernicious than salutary: indeed the more eager and impetuous the natural temper, the greater evil is in this case to be apprehended from it, both to the man himself, and to those with whom he is connected. As to himself, mistaking the warm efforts of mere passion for real religion, he instantly concludes that he is without doubt a real Christian, and so is essentially injured by the imposition he puts upon himself. And then his extravagant expressions of rapturous zeal, which having the colour of exalted piety, strike the eyes of observers with admiration, like the pleasing verdure on the stony ground; these in the end through his apostacy, bring a foul reproach upon religion, and so deeply wound the hearts of all the real friends of it. And from this view of the

subject we see what it is distinguishes these hearers from those considered in the former discourse: it is the different temperature of their animal spirits and passions. They are both alike indisposed to real religion; but those are cool and reserved, these eager and violent. And it often happens that the former have a good deal of natural understanding and sagacity, while the latter are remarkable for their weakness and credulity.

But it will be proper, before we pass on, to examine more particularly the character of the Enthusiast. He has a lively imagination, but no judgment to correct it; and warm feelings, but neither wisdom nor resolution to control them. Struck with appearances, he instantly admits the reality of things, without allowing himself time to inquire into their nature, evidence, and tendency. And impressions thus received, whether from objects presented to the senses or representations made to the fancy, produce a mighty and instantaneous effect on his passions. These agitate his whole frame, and precipitate him into action, without any intervening consideration, reflection, or prospect. And his actions under the impulse of a heated imagination, are either right or wrong, useful or pernicious, just as the notions he has thus hastily adopted happen to be conformable to truth or error. So we shall see the countenance of a man of this complexion kindling into rapture and ecstasy at the idea of something new and marvellous; a flood of tears streaming down his cheeks at the representation of some moving scene of distress; his face turning pale, and his limbs trembling at the apprehension of some impending danger; his whole frame distorted with rage at the hearing of some instance of cruelty; and his eye sparkling with joy in the prospect of some fancied bliss. Nor is it to be wondered that one who is wholly at the mercy of these passions, without the guidance of a sober understanding and the control of a well-disposed heart; should, as is often the case, break out into loud and clamorous language, assume the most frantic gestures, and be guilty of the most strange and extravagant actions.

Such then is the character of the persons described in our text, previous to their hearing the word. Their hearts, like the *stony ground*, are hard, uncultivated, and indisposed to what is truly good; and yet they possess lively imaginations and

warm passions, which, like the *fine mould* upon the rock, would be of excellent use in the great business of religion, if it were not for this other essential defect.—We proceed therefore,

II. To consider the effect which the word instantly produces on the minds of these persons, as our Saviour has admirably described it.

The seed that fell on the stony ground *forthwith sprung up*, that is, as our Lord expounds it, *he heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.* Here, keeping in our eye the character just drawn, there are three things to be considered—his *receiving* the *word*—his receiving it *immediately*, as Mark has it,—and his receiving it *with joy*. From this account one would be apt at first view to conclude, that this man is without doubt a real Christian: but the event proves the contrary. Wherefore it will be necessary to examine very attentively these three particulars.

1. He *receives* the word.

Receiving is a figurative term, and may here be explained of what is the consequence of admitting any doctrine to be true, that is, the professing it. It is indeed used in Scripture to signify faith itself: 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name *a*.' 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him *b*.' Nor is there any inconvenience in understanding it here of faith. For the hearers our Lord here speaks of do *believe*, and indeed Luke says so expressly *c*.—In like manner Simon, and many others in Scripture, are said to believe, who yet were not real Christians.

Now, as faith has the promise of salvation annexed to it, and as some believe who yet are not saved, a distinction becomes necessary: and the common one of an historical and a divine faith is easy and natural. It respects, as we have shewn at large in a former sermon, the degree of assent which the mind gives to the truth, the grounds of it, the temper with which it is accompanied, the effects it produces, and the influence which brings it into existence. The man whose faith is merely historical, gives only a feeble assent to the truth: his faith is little more than opinion: he believes what is told him, just as I should believe a story of some trifling matter that had happen-

a John i. 12. *b* Col. ii. 6. *c* Chap. viii. 14.

ed at a distance, wherein I am no way concerned. Or if he will insist, that his assent to what he calls the gospel, is firm and genuine, yet his notion of the gospel has perhaps a great deal of error mingled with it. And then, he receives it not upon the divine testimony, or a clear perception of the internal and external evidence of it; but upon the confident assertions of others, whose eagerness and zeal, expressed by their loud voice and violent gesture, have a mighty effect upon that credulity we spoke of under the former head. Further, his faith is not cordial; it has not the hearty approbation of his judgment and will; nor does it produce the kindly and acceptable fruits of love and obedience. Yet it is not without its effects, for being of that enthusiastic turn of mind before described, his imagination and passions have a great influence on his profession. Whence those strong appearances of sincerity, earnestness, and zeal, whereby he imposes upon himself and others. Now, he loudly affirms he believes, scarcely admitting that man to be a Christian who at all hesitates. Then, he treats cool reasoning and calm reflection as inimical to religion. And so goes on to pronounce the charge of hypocrisy upon all who fall not in exactly with his notions, and are not as eager in the defence of them as himself. *Come see*, says he with Jehu, *my zeal for the Lord of hosts* a. In such sense do these hearers of whom our Saviour speaks in the text, *receive* the word. And if we reverse the character just drawn, we shall have a clear idea of him who receives the truth in the love of it, and who believes to the saving of his soul: remembering at the same time, that as saving faith has divine truth for its object, so it rises into existence through the influence of divine grace.

2. He receives the word *immediately*.

The seed is said in the text to spring up *forthwith*, and so the idea may respect the quickness of the vegetation. But Mark applies the term *immediately* to the reception of the word. And indeed it is true both of the reception and the operation of it. He receives it not obliquely or circuitously, but *straitly* or directly, as the word ευθυς signifies. It is no sooner spoken than it is admitted to be true. A certain predilection in favour of the speaker, his eagerness and positivity, and many

a 2 Kings x. 16.

other accidental circumstances beget assent—immediate assent to what he has no clear conception of, and the evidence of which he gives himself no time to consider. He is not embarrassed, as we said before, with any the least doubt, nor does he feel himself disposed to hesitate, reflect, or compare what he thus hastily and confusedly hears, with the Scriptures of truth. So, without either his judgment being informed or his will renewed, he is impetuously carried away with a mere sound: his affections are set afloat, and his passions wrought up, he knows not how, into a wild ferment, the effect of which as instantly appears in his countenance, gesture, and conduct. He professes the truth, becomes a flaming defender of it, and outstrips all around him in acts of intemperate zeal, as hastily and inconsiderately done as the word was hastily and inconsiderately received. So his conversion is considered by himself and some other weak people as instantaneous, and on that account not only extraordinary but the more sure and genuine.—But what deserves our more particular attention is,

3. His receiving the word *with joy*.

Joy is a pleasing elevation of the spirits excited by the possession of some present, or the expectation of some future good. Now the gospel is good news, and so adapted to give pleasure to the mind. He therefore who receives it with joy, receives it as it ought to be received. But the man our Saviour here describes is not a real Christian; his joy therefore must have something in it, or in the circumstances accompanying it, distinguishable from that of a genuine believer. Of Herod it is said that 'he heard John gladly *a*;' and from the story it clearly appears, Herod remained, notwithstanding, the same profligate man he was before. How then is the joy of the one to be distinguished from that of the other? I answer, by *what precedes it*—by *what excites it*—and by *the effects of it*.

1. Let us consider *what precedes it*.

The real Christian, previous to his enjoying solid peace, is usually much depressed and cast down. Nor is his dejection the effect of bodily disorder, or an ill-temperature of the animal spirits, or of something he can give no rational account of. It is an anxiety occasioned by a sense of sin, an apprehension

a Mark vi. 20.

of God's displeasure, and a fear that he may be denied those spiritual pleasures he earnestly thirsts after. The cause of his trouble is not a chimera, it has a real existence in his breast, it has a painful and regular operation there, and he can reason in a plain sensible manner about it. Now, as the gospel is adapted to relieve the mind of those complaints, and is on that account styled the gospel or glad-tidings, so there are many passages wherein it is directly addressed to persons of this description. And many historical instances we meet with in the Bible of those who have been comforted and made happy by its encouraging reasonings and gracious promises. From the testimony therefore of Scripture, and the nature of the gospel itself, it may be rationally concluded, it cannot afford true joy to a heart that is not thus prepared to receive it. The degree indeed of affliction necessary to be endured, in order to prepare men for the cheerful reception of divine truth, it may not be easy for us to determine. God however knows: and some he leads on to the enjoyment of religious pleasures in a more gentle and gradual manner than others. But it stands to reason, that the joy the heart feels must bear some proportion to the anxiety it has suffered.

Now vain light enthusiastic persons are in a great degree strangers to these painful exercises of mind we have been just describing. It is on a sudden, induced by some motive of curiosity, that they hear the word; as suddenly they receive it; and as suddenly they are elevated and transported by it. Their minds, previous to the joy they boast of, are wholly unoccupied with any serious substantial sentiments about divine things. Some persons, indeed, who come within the description of the text, may have had general convictions of sin, and alarming apprehensions of the wrath of God; but these painful feelings are desultory and temporary, and capable of being quickly allayed, if not entirely removed, by the stupifying opiate of worldly pleasures. Wherefore a rapturous joy, which suddenly succeeds to a kind of dread that has no ingenuous disposition mingled with it, as well as a joy preceded by no anxiety at all; may be naturally suspected to originate in enthusiasm rather than religion.—But,

2. Let us inquire *what* it is that *excites* this joy.

The causes of that elevation of the spirits which we commonly call joy are various. Wine and other inebriating liquors give a brisk circulation to the blood and nervous fluids, and so exhilarate and gladden the heart. A sudden impression made on the senses by external objects will have the like effect. The reveries of the imagination, in a dream or delirium, will create a fascinating kind of pleasure. Admiration, wonder, and astonishment have a great influence to produce it. Yea, the more tender passions of pity and commiseration are accompanied with a degree of complacency and delight. So that joy may owe its existence to the senses, the imagination, and the tumultuous or soothing operation of the other passions; as well as to sound reasoning, and a well-grounded persuasion of real truth, and of our interest in the great blessings of it, which are the only legitimate sources of religious joy.

Now, this observed, it is easy to conceive how a man of the cast our Saviour here speaks of, may be said to receive the word with joy. In some instances it is the word itself, the mere sound without any idea affixed to it, that creates a joy. The effect is instantly and mechanically produced by the tone and cadence of the voice, accompanied by an appearance, attitude, and gesture that happen to please. The man is delighted, elevated, and surprised, and he knows not why. Facts might be mentioned directly in point. Some have been heard to say at the passing out of an assembly, in words to this effect, "What a heavenly preacher! he spoke like an angel—but I could not understand him." In other instances it is not the sound only, but the sense that affects. Here, however, it will be found, that the joy the man feels is purely the effect of his imagination being amused with objects new, great, and marvellous, or with scenes of a soft, tender, moving kind: and not of his heart's being relieved of a burden with which it had been oppressed, or his being comforted with the hope of obtaining that spiritual good he had thirsted after; for he had neither groaned under the burden of sin, nor had he aspired to true holiness.

To exemplify what we mean, we will suppose the preacher to describe the joys of heaven by striking figures taken from sensible objects. He holds up to view a paradise exquisitely beautiful and enchanting: the trees, shrubs, and flowers, all perfect

in their kind, arranged in the loveliest order, and affording a fragrance most delightful to the smell, and fruits most delicious to the taste; verdant banks, purling streams, shady bowers, transporting prospects; and the joy heightened, now by the soft melody of the grove, then the rapturous symphony of human voices, and then the loud and swelling notes of angelic bands. This, this, he assures the listening multitude is heaven! here they shall enjoy increasing pleasures, without the least anxiety, pain or disgust; and without the most distant apprehension of either interruption or end. Is it to be wondered that such a scene, painted in the liveliest colours, beheld by a glowing imagination, and realized by unsuspecting credulity, should give ecstatic joy to a carnal heart? It is not. But is there religion in all this? Ah! no.

So likewise we may easily conceive how a pleasing kind of sensation, excited in the breast by a pathetic description of misery, particularly the sufferings of Christ, may be mistaken for religion. Many a one has heard this sad tale told, and instantly concluded from his feelings, which partook partly of pain and pleasure, that he loved Christ. The sensation, in these instances, is precisely the same with that which a tender spectator feels at a tragical exhibition in the theatre. And if I might be allowed to relate a little story I have somewhere met with, it would both illustrate and confirm what has been asserted. One of a compassionate disposition, but grossly ignorant, (perhaps an Indian) hearing for the first time in a Christian assembly a striking description of our Saviour's last passion, melted into tears; and after the service was over, eagerly besought the preacher to be ingenuous with him, and tell him whether the fact he had related was true, for he hoped in God that such a cruel deed could never have been perpetrated.

But to bring the matter still nearer. We will suppose what is said to be divested of all *imagery*, and that men are told in plain words that Jesus Christ came to procure for them the pardon of their sins, salvation from the miseries of hell, and a right to future and eternal happiness: I see no reason why a general apprehension of these truths and a general assent to them, may not excite some pleasure, yea even joy in their breasts, without their hearts being a whit the better. Can any one whose con-

science tells him he has sinned, who feels remorse for it, and dreads the tremendous consequence of dying under the curse of Almighty God; can, I say, such person avoid being anxious? And if so, can he do otherwise than rejoice, when he apprehends, though the ground of the apprehension may be a mistaken one, that God has forgiven him?

What dread has the conscience of many an ignorant bigotted Papist felt from a conviction of his having sinned! And how happy has he instantly felt himself upon his having confessed to the priest and received absolution, while, alas! he has remained as wicked as ever! In this case truth is mixed with error, and the false joy he feels arises out of this corrupt mixture. He believes God is disposed to pardon sin for the sake of Christ. So, agreeable to the language of the text, he may be said to receive the word with joy. But then it is his mistaken notion about confession, and the power of the priest to absolve him, thus mingled with his general assent to the Christian doctrine, that has the main influence to excite that pleasing sensation he feels and boasts of. And the case is much the same with many Protestants as well as Papists. The man's conscience reproaches him for certain crimes, and he feels himself wretched. He is told God is merciful, and will forgive men their sins for Christ's sake. The news gives him joy, for he flatters himself he shall escape the punishment he dreaded. But his joy is without foundation, for he has no just idea of the evil of sin itself, no ingenuous sorrow for it, and no sincere desire to be delivered from it.

In like manner we may easily conceive how a man of this character may be amused, entertained, and even transported with a hope of heaven. He is told, and very truly too, that in heaven there is a perfect freedom from all pain and sorrow, and an uninterrupted enjoyment of the most exquisite delights. These tidings he receives with joy. But the moment he is told, that this freedom from pain is accompanied with a freedom from sin, and that these positive pleasures result from communion with a holy God, and a participation of his purity and rectitude; the moment, I say, he is told this, his joy abates, languishes, and dies.—But I forbear. What has been said may suffice to enable us to distinguish on the important question, What it is that excites our joy.—We are next to consider,

3. What are *the effects* of it.

The joy a real Christian feels is sober, rational, well-grounded, and will admit of the most pleasing reflections.—He possesses himself: he can calmly reason upon the state of his mind, and those great truths and objects the contemplation of which makes him happy; and he can recollect the pleasures he has enjoyed on some special occasions with composure and satisfaction. —It humbles him. The higher he ascends the mount of communion with God, the less he appears in his own eyes. Those beams of the Sun of righteousness which gladden his heart, throw a light upon his follies and sins. With Job *he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes a.* And, as the apostle expresses it, *thinks soberly of himself, as he ought to think b.*— His joy inspires him with meekness, candour and benevolence. It allays, if not entirely extinguishes, the rage of violent passion, fans the flame of fervent charity, and puts the soul into a temper to unite cordially with all good men, to pity the bad, and to forgive its bitterest enemies.—His joy, in a word, makes him watchful and holy. He rejoices with trembling, is upon his guard against every thing that may disturb the tranquillity of his mind, holds sin at a distance as his greatest enemy, and aspires with growing ardour to the likeness of the ever blessed God.

On the contrary, who that contemplates the character of the credulous self-deceived enthusiast, but must see what has been said of the real Christian awfully reversed in his temper and conduct? Is he sober, prudent, and self-collected? Ah! no. He is little better than a madman, or one *drunk with wine wherein is excess.* His heaven is a fool's paradise, and his account of it as unintelligible as the frantic talk of one in a delirium. Is he humble? Far from it. The pride of religious frenzy swells him into importance. Imagining himself a favourite of heaven, he looks down upon his fellow-mortals with an air of indifference, if not contempt—"Stand at a distance, I am holier than thou." Is he meek, candid, and benevolent? So much the reverse, that the very names of these virtues sound harshly in his ear, and stand for little else in his opinion than pusillanimity, formality, and hypocrisy. Is he conscientious and circumspect in his deportment? No; boasting of his freedom, he can take

a Job xlii. 6. b Rom. xii. 3.

liberties that border on immorality, and treat the scruples of a weak believer as indicating a legal spirit. Superior to the drudgery of duties, he walks at large, in no danger of being thrown into suspense about his state towards God by what he calls human frailties; and not doubting but that his zeal, which, like the Persian scythes, mows down without mercy all before him, will open his way to a triumphant crown in heaven.

Now, all these things considered—*what precedes*—*what excites*—and *what follows* the joy our Saviour here speaks of, we shall be at no loss to distinguish clearly between the joy of an enthusiast, and that of a real Christian. To proceed,

Having thus received the word with joy, he professes himself a Christian. And thus much must be said in his favour, that being sure he is right, he is not ashamed of his faith. This ingenuity and frankness of temper secures him from all imputation of hypocrisy, and induces his friends to hope that with all his frailties he may possibly be a good man. So he is admitted to the participation of divine ordinances, is enrolled among the number of professing Christians, and for a while, allowing for the extravagancies of intemperate zeal, behaves himself in a manner not to be materially censured. But what is the event? Sad to say! *Apostacy.* But the consideration of this, with what follows, we shall refer to the next sermon.

In the meanwhile, let me beseech those who answer to the character we have been describing, to consider seriously their state towards God. Consideration is, I am sensible, what you are not accustomed to: but in a matter of such consequence as this, I would hope you will, at least for this once, yield to our request. Let me ask you then, Can you sincerely believe that a religion which consists wholly in a rapturous elevation of the passions, independent of the clear dictates of the judgment, and the governing dispositions of the heart, can be acceptable to God? Surely if there be such a thing as religion, it must originate in the understanding and conscience, and so diffuse its influence over the passions. It must consist in an affectionate regard to the divine authority, springing from a clear idea of the difference between good and evil, and an ardent desire to escape the latter and enjoy the former. And ah! how deplorable will your condition be, should you in the great day of ac-

count, after all your flaming pretensions to religion, be found utterly destitute of it!

Nothing has, I hope, dropped in the course of this sermon which may convey an idea to any mind unfavourable to religion, as if it had no concern with the passions, and were not adapted to afford joy to the heart. It is indeed most interesting to the passions, and has been found, by the experience of the wisest and best of men, to be the pleasantest thing in the whole world. Let a man speculate as long as he will upon the great truths of religion, if he does not feel them, if they neither warm his heart nor influence his life, what is he the better? Neither his profound knowledge, nor the contempt in which he holds those of the opposite character for their ignorance and credulity, will do him any real good. The apostle Paul, with all his accurate and superior understanding of the great things of God, was a warm, lively, passionate Christian. He knew what it was to be transported on occasions almost beyond himself. *Whether*, says he to the Corinthians, *we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us* [a]. May we be such Christians as he was!

To conclude. What has been said will, I hope, have an effect to relieve the humble but afflicted Christian, of some uncomfortable doubts with which he may have been oppressed respecting his state towards God. You, my friends, who are of a timorous make, and, through various causes, of a sorrowful spirit, are strangers to the rapturous feelings of which these confident people we have been describing so much boast. But it does not from thence follow, that you are utterly unacquainted with the pleasures of religion, and that your hearts are not right towards God. You have seen the difference between good and evil; you have deeply lamented your sins, and hungered and thirsted after righteousness; you have cordially approved of that method of salvation divine grace has appointed, and have intrusted your immortal all to the hands of Christ. Why then should you fear? Be of good courage. The blessed Jesus is your friend, and he will keep what you have committed to him against the great day.

[a] 2 Cor. v. 13, 14.

PART II.

THE character of ENTHUSIASTIC hearers is now under consideration. Their temper and conduct are described with remarkable clearness and precision in the text. *Some seeds fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had not root, they withered away a.* Our Saviour's exposition of this part of the parable runs thus, verse 20, 21.—'He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.' Now here we have proposed to consider—the character of these persons previous to their hearing the word—the effect it instantly produces on their minds—their failure afterwards—and the causes of it. The first two of these inquiries were the subjects of the preceding sermon, and we go on now,

III. To consider the lamentable *apostacy* of these deluded men.

The seed that fell upon stony places, and forthwith sprung up, in a little time *withered away.* It did not rise into the stalk and ear, and so bear fruit; but the verdure passed off almost as soon as it was beheld, and the seed itself totally perished *b.* This our Lord explains of the unhappy man's *enduring for a while,* and then *being offended;* or, as Luke has it *c,* his *believing for a while,* and then *falling away.* Here two things will deserve our notice—the *term* of his profession—and the *manner* in which it is *renounced.*

1. The *term* of his profession is short.

Between the sowing of seed in the decline of the year and the reaping at the following harvest, there is a considerable intervening space: but the seed the text speaks of springs up and is gone in a few days or weeks. So here—It is by degrees, and

a Matt. xiii. 5, 6.

b ——Primis segetes moriuntur in herbis;
Et modo sol nimius, nimius modo corripit imber.—OVID.

c Chap. viii. 13.

for a course of years, the genuine Christian is advancing towards perfection. But alas! the poor, vain, unprincipled professor is instantly at the zenith of all his glory. Some indeed, hold it out longer than others; and the reason may be, because nothing remarkable arises from without to try their constancy, and to bring forward their real characters to view. But, for the most part, a short course of time shews what are men's principles and motives of conduct. Enthusiastic zeal, like inflammable air, quickly evaporates. The sources of that pleasure which gives existence to a spurious religion, and an equivocal devotion, are soon exhausted. The imagination tires, the senses are palled, and the passions, for want of novelty and variety to keep them alive, sink away into a languid, unfeeling, torpid state. Or, if the man is still the same restless being he ever was, some new object catches his attention, and puts an end to his former connexions and pursuits. *His goodness, as the morning cloud and the early dew, passeth away a.* Like a flaming meteor, having awhile drawn the attention of all around him, he disappears and vanishes into eternal oblivion. Of him we may say, in the language of the psalmist, *How is he brought into desolation as in a moment! as a dream when one awaketh: so, O Lord, when thou awakest thou shalt despise his image b.*—But, to be a little more particular,

2. In what *manner* does he *renounce* his profession?

He either silently quits it, or publicly disavows it. He is *offended*, stumbles, falls, *falls away.* He no longer maintains and defends the truth, no longer frequents the house of God, no longer associates with his fellow-Christians, no longer pays any attention to the duties of the family or the closet, if indeed he ever regarded them at all. The name by which he was called is obliterated, the place that knew him knows him no more; his religious connexions are dissolved; from the view of those with whom he had joined in Christian fellowship he withdraws; and bidding adieu to all that is serious and good, he mingles with the world, enters into their spirit and views, and in the general crowd of vain unthinking men, is forgotten and lost.

Or else, which is sometimes the case, he as openly and contumeliously casts off his profession, as he had hastily and pas-

a Hos. vi. 4. *b* Psal. lxxiii. 19, 20.

sionately assumed it. The faith he once swore to defend with the last drop of his blood, he now laughs at as an old wife's fable. The people with whom he had associated, he stigmatises with the name of fools or impostors, the institutions of religion he treats with sovereign contempt, the reins he throws on the neck of his brutal appetites, *treads under foot the Son of God, counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and does despite to the Spirit of grace a.* He falls, and falls away so as not to be recovered again. For *sinning thus wilfully after he had received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries b.*

How lamentable a case is this! What pious heart can think of it, without feeling for the honour of religion, and trembling for the wretched apostate! Ah, foolish, unhappy, disingenuous man! Is this the result of all thy boasted joys, thy flaming zeal, thy confident vows, thy solemn professions? Thou didst run well, in thine own apprehension and that of multitudes about thee; what hath hindered? Who hath bewitched thee, that thou shouldst renounce the truth, after having had Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified before thine eyes? Would to God, that our remonstrances, expostulations, and entreaties might even yet make some impression on thy heart! But if that is past feeling, let however thy baseness and perfidy secure the sentence of divine justice for ever, from the charge of severity.—It remains that we now consider,

IV. The cause of these men's apostacy.

This our Saviour explains with admirable precision, by teaching us that it is partly owing to the want of something *within* essentially important to religion, and partly to a concurrence of circumstances from *without* unfavourable to the profession of it.

1. Something is wanting *within.*

The parable says, the seed forthwith sprung up because it had *no deepness of earth;* and it withered away, because it had *no root,* as Mark has it *c*; and *lacked moisture,* as it is expressed in Luke *d.* For want of a sufficient quantity of earth, the seed did not sink deep enough into the ground, and through the

a Heb. x. 29. *b* Heb. x. 26, 27. *c* Chap. iv. 6. *d* Chap. viii. 6.

luxuriance of the mould, it too quickly disseminated and sprung up. So that having taken root, there was no source whence the tender grass might be supplied with nourishment; and of consequence it must necessarily in a little time wither and die. Agreeably therefore to the figure, our Lord, in his explanation of the parable, speaks of these hearers as *having no root in themselves.*

And such precisely is the case of the sort of professors we are discoursing of. They have no principle of religion in their hearts. Their notions are not properly digested, they do not disseminate themselves in the mind, take fast hold on the conscience, and incorporate, if I may so express myself, with the practical powers of the soul. 'The word preached does not profit them, not being mixed with faith,' or, as perhaps it might be rendered, because they are not united by faith to the word *a*. They hear the word, affix some general idea to it, admit it all to be true without either consideration or reflection, feel a confused tumultuous agitation of the passions, and so are instantly precipitated into action. But their understanding is not duly enlightened, their judgment is not rightly informed, their conscience is not thoroughly awakened, their will not subdued, nor their affections sanctified. In short, their religion is little else than an airy phantom, a wild reverie, an idle passing dream. Now this being the case, is it to be wondered that in a very little time they fall away?—But this sad event is owing likewise,

2. To a concurrence of circumstances from *without* unfavourable to the profession of religion. These, in the parable, are all comprehended under the idea of *the sun's scorching* the springing grass; and, in our Saviour's exposition of it, are described by the terms *tribulation, persecution, affliction,* and *temptation,* all which *arise because of the word,* or are occasioned by it.

In the early age of Christianity, it was scarce possible for a man to profess the religion of Jesus, without exposing himself thereby to a great temporal inconvenience and distress. Of this our Saviour frequently warned his disciples, telling them that if they would follow him, they must be content for his sake to part with houses, lands, goods, wives, children, and their dearest en-

a Heb. iv. 2.

joyments; yea, that they must be willing to suffer reproach, imprisonment, and death. And what he foretold came to pass; *Through much tribulation they entered into the kingdom of God* a. And this tribulation arose *because of the word.* The doctrine of the cross was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness: its simplicity and purity created an aversion to it, which nothing short of divine power could subdue. So that the implacable resentments of the former urged them to every possible exertion, in order to extirpate the Christian name: and the unsufferable pride of the latter begat in their breasts a sovereign contempt for all who assumed it. Wherefore the professors of this new religion, as it was called, were sure to meet with more or less obloquy and persecution. And such treatment, not failing to bring their sincerity and constancy to the test, soon produced a revolution in those whose profession had nothing to support it but a mere passion for novelty. Their confessions and vows, fair and promising as they might seem, quickly withered beneath the scorching beams of persecution.

The like event hath happened in regard of an infinite number of pretended Christians since those times. And few, even of those whose enthusiasm has risen to the highest pitch, have had firmness enough, merely for the sake of acquiring a splendid name, to renounce all that was dear to them in this world. But the profession of the gospel now flourishes under the mild auspices of liberty, and men may avow their religious principles, not only without danger of being called to account by the magistrate, but with little hazard of suffering any material reproach and abuse from their neighbours. Yet, fashionable as it may be in some periods and countries to assume the appearance of religion, it is still true that he who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. A firm attachment to the simplicity of divine truth, and a conscientious observance of its precepts, will, especially under certain circumstances, expose a man to the ill-natured censures of some, and the cold shy indifference of others.

Now, whatever the affliction or temptation may be which ariseth because of the word, the mere nominal professor, who has not ballast enough in himself to keep him steady, will be

a Acts xiv. 22.

quickly overpowered, sunk, and destroyed. Instances of this sort are too numerous to be particularly recited. How often has the sneer of a profane acquaintance, a trifling affront from a fellow-Christian, or a sudden resistance to a mere fancy or humour, become the occasion of a man's rending himself from his religious connexions, and in the end totally renouncing his profession! Puffed up with pride and conceit, and unprincipled by the grace of God, he stumbles at every stone or pivot he meets, till at length he falls, and falls to rise no more again. And if little offences shall produce this effect, it is not to be thought strange that the mighty storms of adversity, arising now from this, and then from that quarter, should dash to pieces the shallow bark of an empty profession on the rock of infidelity; or that the brisk gales of prosperity should sink it in the quicksands of worldly dissipation and pleasure.

Examples of such miserable apostates there are many; we will instance only a few during our Saviour's personal ministry here on earth, and a little after his ascension into heaven. There was an occasion on which he benevolently fed five thousand people, with a few barley loaves and fishes. The splendour of this miracle so sensibly struck the passions of the multitude, that in an ecstasy of admiration and wonder they cried out, 'This surely is the Messiah, the prophet that should come. Let us take him by force, and make him a king.' Thus instantly and loudly do they profess their faith in Christ; nor would they have hesitated a moment to pronounce the severest censure upon any one of their number, who should have dissented from the proposal. But no moral change having passed on their hearts, what is the result? The next temptation that arises shakes their faith in Christ, dissolves their attachment to him, and puts an end to their profession. On the morrow, piqued at our Lord's freedom in reproving them for their worldliness, and offended at the purity and sublimity of his doctrine, they murmur at him, complain of his sayings as hard and unintelligible, deny that he came down from heaven, and, in a word, go back and walk no more with him.

Of the same character were the men of Nazareth. When our Lord entered their synagogue, and discoursed to them upon a passage from the Old Testament, they fastened their eyes upon

him, bore witness to what he said, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. They were all attention, and seemed deeply affected with his mild and persuasive reasoning. But alas! the scene is soon changed. They urge him to work a miracle among them. He refuses to gratify their curiosity, representing to them their real character, which was like that of their perverse and iniquitous ancestors. Upon which, filled with wrath, they seize him, lead him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, and would have cast him down headlong from thence, had he not passed through the midst of them, and so escaped *a*.

No less extraordinary was the wretched enthusiasm of the people at Jerusalem *b*. One day we see them leading our Saviour in triumph into the city, crying, 'Hosanna to the son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!' and the next, at the persuasion of the chief priests and elders, with unexampled cruelty demanding of Pilate his crucifixion. Who could have supposed a change so marvellous should take place in so short a time? The truth is, the real character of the people was the same the one day as the other: but objects striking their imagination now differently from what they did then, these very extraordinary effects ensued.

In fine, the Laodiceans, at least many of them, were notoriously of the character we have been describing. It is not to be doubted, when the gospel was first preached among them, they received it with joy. The ground was stony, but having a little earth upon it, the seed met with a favourable reception. It forthwith sprung up, and produced a verdure pleasing to the eye, and likely to be followed with a fair harvest. But alas! having no root, and the sun of worldly prosperity arising upon it, it quickly withered. It is easy to imagine the rapturous pleasure these people felt at the first hearing of this new and marvellous doctrine: and probably for a time it continued, and they brought forth some fruits answerable to it. But it was not long ere they relapsed into their former state. Their hearts not being established with grace, and the world with its flattering pleasures wantonly caressing them, their joy declined, their zeal abated, and they became neither cold nor hot. What

a Luke iv. 16—30. *b* Matt. xxi. 1—11.

a strange reverse! How is the gold become dim and the fine gold changed! *Thou sayest*, such is the language of him who searched their hearts, *I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* a.

Nor are characters of this description confined to the first age of Christianity: they have existed in every age and place where the gospel has been preached since that time; in Romish and Reformed churches, in this and other countries, in the establishment and among dissenters. Indeed, enthusiasm is not to be considered as the offspring of religion, or as peculiar to the religious of any denomination; it is the result of a particular cast of mind, or temperature of animal spirits; and to be met with among men of all professions of life. Nor is it, when held under reasonable restraints, without its use to society. The excessive ardour, for instance, of a brave general, has on certain occasions produced efforts, which, though scarcely reconcileable with military skill, have been followed with the most beneficial consequences. And if Christians, whose religion holds up to their view the grandest objects, and the most animating prospects, are sometimes transported almost beyond themselves; it ought not to be thought strange: nor will any evil accrue from it, but on the contrary, much good, both to themselves and others. But when one of an unprincipled heart assumes, under the influence of a heated imagination, the character of a man of religion, every wild and dangerous extravagance is to be apprehended, nor can there remain a doubt that the event of his profession will be such as has been represented. Religion, however, is not to be blamed for these evils, of which it is no way the cause, though it may be the occasion: they are to be set down to the account of a fatal but too frequent combination of a depraved heart with an impetuous natural temper.

Thus have we considered our Saviour's striking description of the second class of hearers, namely, the ENTHUSIASTIC—their character previous to their hearing the word—the effect it instantly produces on their mind—their apostacy—and the causes of it. It remains that we now make a few reflections.

a Rev. iii. 16, 17.

1. What a striking picture has our Saviour here given us of human nature!

The character of enthusiastic hearers is drawn in our text to the life, with the greatest simplicity, and free from all art or colouring; and it has been realized, as was just observed, in instances without number. Every age and country where the gospel has been preached, have furnished examples of persons who have treated it in the manner here described. And how natural to conclude from hence, that Jesus of Nazareth was a teacher that came from God! He taught with authority, not as the Scribes. He had an exact and comprehensive knowledge of all men and of all things. *He needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man* a. How devoutly should we revere his infinite wisdom and penetration! How diligently listen to his instructions! And how implicitly confide in his word and promises! And since he has thus exactly foretold what treatment his gospel would meet with in the world, how should this consideration fortify the minds of his faithful ministers, amidst all the discouragements they meet with from this quarter! Be it so, that enthusiasm, as well as infidelity, erects its standard against the gospel wherever it comes, our divine Master has told us that so it would be: we have therefore no reason to be unduly cast down at an appearance so sad and unpleasing.

2. Of what importance is it to study ourselves, and to keep a guard upon our passions!

Men differ, as we have seen, from one another in regard of their animal frame, as well as their moral disposition; and the former has no small influence, though not in so great a degree as the latter, on their speculations and feelings about matters of religion. To know therefore what is our natural cast, what the temperature of our animal spirits, how we are apt to be affected with external objects, whether we are lively or phlegmatic, gay or gloomy, cheerful or severe; to know this, I say, is a matter of great consequence. For hereby we shall be secured from mistaking our own proper character, and pronouncing too hastily either for or against ourselves. Some truly pious Christians have been apt to conclude from those painful feelings, which are

a John ii. 25.

the mere effect of natural constitution, that they are utter strangers to the grace of God: while others, on the mere ground of their lively and elevated feelings, have as confidently insisted that they are Christians, and Christians too of a superior rank. In the former case, the mistake is not a little prejudicial to a man's present comfort; in the latter, it is essentially dangerous to his everlasting interest.

Let us therefore study ourselves. It is manly to wish to know what our real character is. Self-knowledge will have an important influence on our general conduct. It will prevent many solecisms in our daily deportment, both as men and Christians. It will put us upon our guard against the arts of designing infidels, and the miserable delusions of enthusiasm. And it will assist us in our attention to those duties which are wisely and graciously appointed for our furtherance in the divine life.

3. We see what kind of preaching is to be coveted, and what avoided.

Improvement in substantial knowledge and real holiness will be the grand object with every wise man; to this he will readily sacrifice imagination and passion. These, indeed, are not to be treated with neglect. A dull, heavy, lifeless discourse, whatever useful instruction it may contain, will have little effect. A man who wishes to persuade ought no doubt to feel his subject; and religious subjects are of all others the most sublime and animating. But if all the preacher's aim is to amuse the fancy of his audience, without informing their judgment, and to rouse their passions, without getting at their hearts, little good is to be expected from his most ingenious essays, or his most strenuous exertions.

Religion is a serious thing, and so miserably ignorant and perverse are the generality of hearers, that they need be closely reasoned, and faithfully dealt with upon this most important matter. What prospect is there then of a sinner's being converted to God by rhetorical flourishes, well-turned periods, or an artful laboured display of splendid abilities! And how much less prospect of his becoming either wise or good by the violent impulse of loud vociferation, unmeaning tones, and frantic gestures! Will the exciting an ignorant hearer's wonder by a few empty jejune criticisms, convince him of the evil of sin and his

danger of suffering the wrath of Almighty God? Will the playing upon his imagination with a plenty of ill-managed tropes and figures, and a succession of idle trifling stories, persuade him to break off his vices, and become a sound substantial Christian? Will the grimace of a distorted countenance, the thunder of an unnaturally elevated voice, or the terror of uplifted hands, compel him to rank among the followers of the Lamb? Ah! no. Effects, indeed, and very important ones, have been produced by these expedients: but alas! they are such as have rather injured, than served the real interests of mankind. This has sufficiently appeared from the preceding discourse.

Let us, therefore, if we would rightly understand the word of the kingdom, and be savingly benefited by it, choose those for our instructors who clearly state it, ably defend it, and with all the seriousness, affection, and earnestness which its infinite importance demands, address our hearts and consciences upon it. It is not wild enthusiasm, but a divine faith, that must bring us to heaven.

4. Our Lord, by the instruction given us in our text, has enabled us to reply to an objection often urged against the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance.

We are frequently reminded of persons whose profession for a time was fair and splendid, but who in the end renounced it. And no doubt this has been the fact in too many sad instances. But what does it prove? No more than that these men were either designing hypocrites, or else hastily took upon them a profession of what they did not rightly understand, truly believe, and cordially approve. And will any one say that the event of such a profession is at all to be wondered at? or that it does in the least clash with the assurances our Saviour has given us of his attention to the final interests of his faithful people? It might naturally be expected that the man who received the word in the manner the text describes, should by and by be offended. No real change had ever passed on his heart, no living principle of religion was ever implanted in his breast, and no promise was ever given him of such support and assistance, as should secure him from apostacy in the hour of temptation and danger.

But where the understanding has been duly enlightened, and the heart really impregnated with a principle of religion, as it is not likely that what is in a manner interwoven with a man's nature should be easily parted with; so likewise the Scriptures assure us, that divine grace will watch over it, defend, cherish, and bring it to perfection. The former idea is authorised by our Lord's commendation of *the water of life*, in his discourse with the woman of Samaria; *it shall be*, says he, *in him to whom I give it, a well of water springing up into everlasting life* a. And the latter idea, I mean the attention which the blessed God pays to this vital principle of religion in the hearts of his people, is strikingly expressed by our Saviour in those remarkable words:—'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand—and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand b.' Once more,

5. And *lastly*.—Let not the mournful subject we have been considering create any discouragement in the breast of the truly humble but weak Christian. Methinks I hear him, in the sadness of his heart say, "I have received the word, and, as I thought, with joy. But what if my joy should prove a mere illusion of the fancy? And what if my profession should issue in apostacy?" This be assured, Christian, and I think I speak upon the authority of Scripture, will not be the case. Recollect what has been said respecting the temper of your mind previous to the comfort you enjoyed, the considerations that excited it, and the effects it produced.

You was in earnest about the salvation of your soul. You clearly saw you had offended God, and lost his image; that you were in danger of suffering his wrath, and that there was no help in you. What relieved you of your fear was, a firm persuasion, upon the testimony of Scripture, that God is merciful for Christ's sake to the chiefest of sinners. On the merit of this divine Saviour you wholly reposed yourself for pardon, justification, and eternal life. So you was humbled before God under a sense of your own vileness; you regretted the offences you had committed against him; you felt your obligations to his mercy; you resolved upon taking the proper measures for

a John iv. 14. b John x. 28, 29.

mortifying your lusts, and resisting temptation; and though you have not yet attained, nor are yet perfect, it is however your daily concern to avoid sin, and to please God.

And now, I ask, is there not a clear distinction between your character and the characters of the self-deceiving hypocrite, and the wild enthusiast? Why then should you be thus cast down? Put your trust in God. Go on, diligently hearing the word of the kingdom, comforting yourself with its many gracious promises, cherishing in your breast its divine temper, and practising its sacred precepts. So you may rest assured the event will be to your infinite joy. *God is faithful who has promised.*

DISCOURSE IV.

THE CHARACTER OF WORLDLY-MINDED HEARERS CONSIDERED.

MATT. XIII. 7.—*And some fell among thorns: and the thorns sprung up and choked them.*

THE characters of the two first classes of hearers having been considered, we proceed now to that of the

THIRD,—The WORLDLY-MINDED. These are described in our text—*Some seeds fell among thorns: and the thorns sprung up and choked them.*

The soil in the hedge or enclosure round about the field, is usually richer and deeper, and so more favourable for cultivation than the ground on the way-side, or in stony places. Wherefore the seed which accidentally falls here will be likely, after a time, to take root: nor is it liable to be trod on, or instantly scorched with heat. But then unhappily the thorns which, through the luxuriance of the soil, grow here in abundance, spring up with it, and crowding about it, keep off the sun and the air: so its growth is checked, and of consequence, it brings no fruit to perfection; but in a course of time it is choked and destroyed.

Such is the figure our Lord adopts, to describe the effects which the word produces on their minds who, amidst all their pretensions to religion, are yet men of the world, and bring not forth such fruit as might reasonably be expected from their profession. His exposition of this part of the parable you have in the 22d verse: *He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*—Here you will observe,

1. The treatment the word meets with from these persons.—They *hear* it, and *receive* it.

These terms have been already explained, and are here to be understood, as in the former case, of affixing some idea to the gospel; giving a general assent to its truth, and professing it. But some difference is to be remarked, even in regard of these particulars, between the sort of persons considered in the former discourse and those we are now treating of. The enthusiast, if not, literally speaking, under the influence of mere sound, yet hears with such an eager rapid kind of levity, that his notions of religion are a perfect chaos of wild ideas, without either order or consistency. The transition, too, he makes from his first hearing the word to his believing and professing it, is almost instantaneous; and in the whole business he appears to be deeply interested in what he is about. But the case is perhaps otherwise here. The man hears, and goes on to hear, till at length he collects a tolerably consistent notion of the gospel. But though, like the other, he admits it all to be true, without feeling himself embarrassed with doubts, yet he discovers little of that zeal, which so strongly marks the character of the enthusiast. After a while, however, he makes a public profession: and this done in the ordinary way, and without any show or parade, he is considered as a sober sedate Christian. Yea, more than this, having professed the word, he brings forth some fruit; for this is evidently implied in the phrase used by Luke *a*, of his *bringing no fruit to perfection.* His conduct is in the general decent and respectable.—Now this being the manner of his receiving the word, you will observe,—

2. How its salutary operation on his heart is obstructed and

a Chap. viii. 14.

defeated.—He *goes forth*, says Luke, that is, mingles with the world, becomes more intimately connected with the businesses and amusements of life than he has occasion; and so by degrees is conformed to the spirit, manners, and conduct of the vain part of mankind *a*. *The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things b*, or *the pleasures of life*, as Luke has it *c*, *enter in*, that is, into his heart. They seize his attention, exercise his thoughts, take up his time, and engross his affections.—And what,

3. Is the event?—These thorns *choke the word.*

Its natural and proper operation on his judgment, conscience, and passions is obstructed; and, after a time, the impressions it had made are wholly effaced, and the very remembrance of it lost. So he *becomes unfruitful.* None of the amiable graces of humility, meekness, temperance, simplicity, and benevolence adorn his profession. He is not indeed as yet, strictly speaking, an apostate, but maintains a general character for sobriety, justice, and decency. It is nevertheless true of him, that he *brings no fruit to perfection.* There is fruit, but it scarce deserves the name of fruit, not having arrived at its proper growth, ripened kindly, or got its true flavour. The duties of piety and devotion are reluctantly, irregularly, and carelessly performed; those of Christian friendship and love are little attended to: and those of mortification and self-denial are almost wholly overlooked and forgotten. And what is the final issue? He is *himself* choked as well as the word, (for so Luke describes it *d*,) with cares, riches, and the pleasures of this life. He dies, perishes, is lost for ever!

Thus you have a general comment upon this part of the parable, and upon our Saviour's exposition of it. And now it will be necessary to consider more particularly,—

I. What those things are which prevent the salutary effect of God's word upon that class of hearers we are here discoursing of.

a Perhaps πορευομενοι may be intended to convey an idea of continued action, as in our Lord's words to the apostles, Matt. x. 7. πορευομενοι κηρυσσετε, 'as ye go, preach.' And in that case, a very important circumstance in the conduct of these hearers, is held up to view, namely, their going on in a constant round of hearing the word, and pursuing the world.

b Matt. iv. 19. *c* Chap. viii. 14. *d* Chap. viii. 14.

II. How they operate to that end; and,

III. The sad event of all.

I. Let us consider what those things are which obstruct the due operation of God's word on the hearts of these men. Our Lord mentions three—*cares—riches—pleasures.*

1*st*, The *cares of the world.*

By the cares of the world he means undue and criminal anxieties about secular concerns. Now, as it is allowed on all hands that worldly cares are not to be wholly reprobated; in order to our clearly shewing how far they are or are not sinful, we will consider them in reference to a threefold view of a man's temporal interests—*subsistence—competence—affluence.*

By *subsistence* we mean the necessaries of life, what a man cannot do without, such as food, raiment, and habitation. To wish for these, to take proper measures to obtain them, and, when we have them, to enjoy them, cannot be wrong. *Your Father*, says our Saviour, *knoweth that ye have need of these things* a. Indifference to them, if that were possible, would be criminal, and of consequence, the not using proper endeavours to procure them, would be criminal also. No pretence of abstractedness from the world, and elevation of heart to heaven, will justify indolence. But then, on the contrary, such a care about even the necessaries of life as involves in it distrust of the providence of God, and drives a man almost to distraction; such a care as occupies all his thoughts and time, and renders him incompetent to the duties of religion; and such a care, which is worse, as precipitates him through indulgence and sloth, into dishonest measures to obtain a livelihood, is very sinful and deplorable indeed. This must strike every one at first view, and therefore requires no further illustration here, in order to prove it, which is all our object at present.

Competence is a relative term, and has respect to capacity and desire. Such a proportion of the world as is suited to our capacity, that is, to our character and station in life, is a real competence; but such as is suited to desires not regulated by reason and religion, is an equivocal competence. As to the latter, all care about it is criminal. But as to the former, a real com-

a Luke xii. 30.

petence, we do not sin when we wish to possess it. We are only wishing for so much property as the habits of life, acquired by education and the rank we hold in society, do in a sense make necessary; and surely that cannot be wrong. A prince requires more for his support than a subject, and a man in a middling station than a peasant. Desires, cares, and exertions therefore, directed to this object, are not only allowable, but commendable. But even though the object may be right, our care about it may exceed; which is the case when it so entangles our minds, oppresses our spirits, and engrosses our time, as to make us unhappy, and unfit us for the duties we owe to God and our fellow-creatures. In this case, we are no doubt to be blamed, and ought to use our utmost endeavours to correct so threatening an evil.—Once more,

Affluence, or such an abundance of the world as goes beyond subsistence and competence, is also a desirable good. Wherefore the taking prudent, honest, and temperate measures to acquire wealth, to the end our lives may be rendered more comfortable, and we may have it in our power to minister to the necessities of others, is not to be censured. But if our object is, the gratifying our pride and other vain frivolous passions, our painful labours, however they may assume the specious character of prudent industry, must needs be offensive to God, and injurious to our best interests.

If men will at all events be rich, not regarding the will of Providence, or reflecting that riches are often an occasion of great folly and sin; if they will set their hearts on the world, and put out all their strength in pursuit of it, losing sight of God, their souls, and a future state; the cares and anxieties that follow will bring a tremendous load of guilt upon their consciences, pierce them through with many sorrows, and, like thorns and briers, stifle in their breasts every worthy, generous, and religious sentiment.—So much then may suffice for explaining what is meant by the *cares of the world*, and to shew how far they are or are not sinful. Their operation to obstruct the progress of religion in the heart, will come to be considered hereafter.—We go on now,

2dly, To the *deceitfulness of riches*, the next thing our Saviour mentions.

His meaning is, that men are prone to reason mistakenly about riches; and the mode of speech he adopts more strongly and elegantly marks the idea, than if he had so expressed himself *a*. Riches are, in a sense, themselves deceitful. They assume an appearance different from their real nature and use, and so the unwary observer is miserably imposed upon. Our business then will be to consider the false reasonings of a depraved heart in reference to—*wealth itself*—*the mode of acquiring it*—and *the term of enjoying it.*

1. As to *wealth itself*, men reason very mistakenly about it.

To treat riches with absolute contempt, as some affect to do, is against all sense and reason. They are the gift of God, and when applied to their proper use, are a great blessing: they will procure the necessaries and accommodations of life, and enable us, if we have hearts, to do a great deal of good. But alas! so besotted are mankind, they suppose wealth hath an intrinsic excellence in it, which it really hath not. A diamond, it is true, is more precious than a pebble, and gold than a clod of earth. But compare either of them with true wisdom and the exalted pleasures of religion, and how mean and trifling do they appear!

The value of riches is chiefly to be estimated by their use. But even here men greatly mistake it. Money will purchase a man delicate food, gorgeous apparel, stately mansions, splendid furniture, power and some kind of respect from his fellow-creatures. But will it set him beyond the reach of sickness, pain, disappointment, vexation, and contempt? Or, if he escapes these evils, can his wealth give him peace of mind, and fully satisfy the large desires of his heart? Will it make him completely and substantially happy? No. It is evident from the nature of the thing, and from the united testimony of all, sooner or later, that it will not. And yet so foolish, so mad are the generality of mankind, that they reason and act as if they thought it would. With what eager desire, expectation, and confidence do they look at these objects of sense! And how do these baubles (for so I call them as compared with intellectual and divine pleasures) dazzle their eyes, confound their reason, pervert their consciences, set all their passions on

a ἀπάτη τοῦ πλούτου.

fire, and precipitate them, at the hazard of their everlasting interests, into practices the most fraudulent, cruel and oppressive!—Which leads me to observe further, that in regard,

2. Of *the mode of acquiring* wealth, men reason very mistakenly.

Wealth does not fall to the lot of all, and the ascent from a low station to that of opulence and honour, is usually slow, steep, and slippery. But multitudes, at the very setting off, mistake it. Their eager desire of success is by false reasoning converted into assurance of it. They *will* be rich; and their imagination instantly realizing the object, the measures that should be taken to secure it are deranged by precipitancy. Industry, integrity, prudence, and opportunity have a great influence on worldly prosperity, but above all, the smiles of providence.

In regard of the first of these there is perhaps no failure here: they exert every nerve, compass sea and land to gain their point. But truth and probity, or at least frankness and generosity, standing in their way, these must be thrust aside; so they miss their end, forgetting that honesty is the best policy. Or if conscience is not thus in the beginning laid asleep, the plans they frame, for want of coolness and consideration, are not properly digested or warily pursued, and so they fail. Or if this is not the case, opportunity—the favourable moment for carrying a purpose into execution—is missed. And then providence is overlooked; their immoderate love of the world, which is their idol, shuts God out of their thoughts: or if they do at all advert to that influence on which the success of their endeavours depends, their reasoning upon it is essentially wrong. So God is justly provoked to blast their schemes, or to punish them yet more sensibly, by converting the success he permits them to meet with into a curse, and so making their riches their ruin. 'He that trusteth, (says Solomon,) in his riches, shall fall *a*.' And 'they that will be rich, (says the apostle,) fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which

a Prov. xi. 28.

while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows *a*.' Once more,

3. Men reason deceitfully concerning *the term of enjoying* the wealth they acquire.

From their vehement passion for riches, and the prodigious expense they are at to procure them, it is evident they conceive highly both of the *greatness* and the *continuance* of that enjoyment they expect. For who would put out all his strength, and endanger his happiness in another world, for a thing of naught, and which he knew would be no sooner got than lost? But men are deceived in both these particulars. As to the first, it has been already shewn that it is not in the nature of wealth to satisfy the vast desires of the soul: let a man therefore possess ever so large an abundance of it, there will still remain a vacuity in his mind, and of consequence his riches cannot make him completely happy.

But suppose his idea of worldly enjoyment to be moderate and within the bounds of reason, even of such enjoyment he may be disappointed. Few who have compassed their object, and acquired the exact portion of wealth they had marked out to themselves, have found that comfort resulting from it, which they naturally enough expected. The fruition hath been allayed by a variety of unforeseen circumstances, if not wholly defeated by bodily disorders, or troubles of a kind that riches cannot prevent or soothe.

But admitting, still further, that the enjoyment exactly answers his expectation, yet how short is the term of possession! Very quickly, perhaps upon his tasting the sweets of affluence, he is deprived of it. By fraud, or force, or some other calamity, he is cast down from the eminence he had taken such pains to reach, into an abyss of poverty and wretchedness. *Charge them*, says the apostle, *that are rich in this world, not to trust in uncertain riches b*. Or if no such accident befals him, yet while he is promising himself many years enjoyment of his wealth, death is preparing to turn him out of possession.

This has sometimes happened, and our Lord mentions it in one of his parables, with a view to illustrate this very point of the deceitfulness of riches. *The ground of a certain rich man*

a 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. *b* 1 Tim. vi. 17.

brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, this will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow my fruits, and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided a? Could any one reason more mistakenly about riches than this unhappy man did? And how justly did he merit the character of a *fool* which our Lord gives him! The number of such fools is not small: for though the like event may not have happened to the greater part of the rich, yet it is too evident that the majority look forward to futurity with the same sanguine expectations this man did.

But suppose there are persons, here and there, who hold the peaceable possession of their wealth, with a relish for all the comforts it can procure them for twenty or thirty years; how short is the term! And will a man of sense say, that a few instances of this sort will justify the wild reasonings and confident hopes of him, who sets out on the rapid career of accumulating wealth, at the expense of ease and health, if not of conscience? certainly not. How great then is *the deceitfulness of riches!* —It remains now to consider the third and last thing our Saviour mentions, as an obstruction to the due operation of God's word on the heart; and that is,

3*dly*,—*The pleasures of this life*, or, as Mark expresses it, *the lusts of other things.*

Here we need not be very particular, for as riches are the means of procuring pleasures, and most generally coveted with that view, the same folly and criminality we have charged to the account of the avaricious, is, with a little variation of circumstances, to be imputed likewise to the sensualist. Pleasure indeed abstractedly considered is a real good: the desire of it is congenial with our nature, and cannot be eradicated without the destruction of our very existence. This is not therefore what our Lord condemns. He well knew that there are passions and appetites proper to men as men; that the moderate gratification

a Luke xii. 16—20.

of them is necessary to their happiness, and of consequence, that the desire of such gratification is not sinful. But the pleasure he prohibits is that which results from the indulgence of irregular desires; I mean such as are directed to wrong objects, and such as are excessive in their degree.

With respect to the former, men are universally agreed that they are criminal, offensive to God, injurious to society, and destructive to him who indulges them. The murderer, adulterer, and others that might be mentioned, we behold with abhorrence. But it is the latter kind of pleasures our Saviour has here chiefly in view, those which are in themselves innocent, but become criminal by excess. And it is from this quarter that danger is most to be apprehended, in regard of the generality of mankind. For as it is difficult in many cases to draw the line exactly between moderation and excess, men have a thousand ways of excusing what is wrong, and of flattering themselves that their pleasures are innocent, when they are really hurtful. There are, however, certain rules by which every one may be enabled to decide upon this question for himself, provided his passions and appetites are not under an undue influence. Innocent pleasures no doubt become criminal when, instead of invigorating, they relax and enfeeble our spirits; when they take up too much of our time, and so obstruct the regular discharge of duty; when they are an occasion of evil to others; and, above all, when they so steal upon our affections as to indispose us to the more noble and refined enjoyments of virtue and religion.

And now it were endless to enumerate the many particulars that fall under the general character of *the pleasures of this life.* Nature has provided objects for all the senses wonderfully adapted to afford them delight; and men have employed their utmost wit and ingenuity so to combine, arrange, and diversify them, as to heighten and refine the delight. Hence all the scenes of splendour that dazzle the eye, all the soft and harmonious sounds that captivate the ear, and all the highly-flavoured delicacies that please the taste. Hence the amusements, recreations, and diversions of various description that every where abound, and among people of every rank and condition. These are the things our Saviour speaks of which men lust after. That they

may have the means of procuring them, is the end they propose by the pains they take to get rich; and to the enjoyment of them they devote all the time they can sequester from their worldly labours. Pleasure is the grand thing, their happiness is bound up in it. To the gratification of this passion every thing must submit. So they lose sight, not only of God, but of all intellectual enjoyments, and at length, through excess, become incapable of relishing those very pleasures which they account the chief good.

Having thus taken a general view of the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world, our next business is to shew how they obstruct the due operation of God's word on the heart. But this we shall dismiss to the next opportunity, and close what has been said with a serious address to three sorts of persons,—the *careful*,—the *covetous*,—and the *voluptuous*.

1. As to those of the first description, the *careful*.

Your case, my friends, is truly pitiable, and all charitable allowance ought to be made for the unavoidable infirmities of human nature. It is not affluence, but subsistence, or at most, competence, that is your object. You are, however, not wholly inexcusable. Prudence and industry are amiable virtues; but your anxiety, exceeding the bounds of reason, is offensive to God, and injurious to yourselves, and therefore deserving of censure. It involves in it a criminal distrust of the faithfulness and goodness of divine providence; and this surely is very disingenuous in those who fear God, for to such I am now more especially addressing myself. What! have you intrusted your immortal interests to the care of the blessed God, and can you hesitate a moment upon the question respecting your temporal concerns? Have you been hitherto provided with the necessaries of life, and can you suppose your heavenly Father, who knoweth that you have need of these things, will desert you for time to come? Besides, this undue solicitude about the world is hurtful to you in many respects. Instead of forwarding, it rather obstructs your affairs. It makes you unhappy, restless, and miserable. And, what is worse, it is a great hindrance to your progress in religion, as will hereafter be more largely shewn. Let me beseech you, then, to be upon your guard against this evil temper. Resist every temptation to it. Check the first risings

of it. Put the best face you can upon your affairs. Oppose your deserts to your wants, and the good you actually do possess to that you are in the anxious pursuit of. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Cherish in your breast a divine faith. Be thoroughly established in the doctrine of a particular providence. Frequently call to mind the interpositions of that providence in your favour. In a word, *be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God* a.

2. As to the *avaricious.*

Permit me to expostulate with you a moment upon the extreme absurdity of your reasoning, and the horrid criminality of your temper and conduct. It is not subsistence, competence, or affluence only you covet: it is the world, the whole world. But the object is not to be attained, or if it were, it would not satisfy. How vain then your *desires!* But your expectations are not boundless like your desires, they are held within narrower limits. Yet we may venture to affirm they are extravagant: for the desires of the avaricious have such an influence on their hopes, that it is scarce possible their expectations should be moderate. You sanguinely hope for an object, which will very probably elude your pursuit; or, if compassed, will not afford you the comfort you promise yourself from it. How vain then are your *expectations!* But such is your love of the world, you are resolved at all adventures to make it your grand object. Be it so then. Carry your resolution into practice. Put out all your strength. Spend the greater part of your life in the pursuit. Leap over the mounds of honour and justice. And at length seize your prey. But what, what do you gain? your gain is loss; the loss of health, peace, reputation, conscience, life, and —O! tremendous thought!—your immortal soul.

Nor should it be thought strange that the love of the world is punished with the loss of the soul; it is most deserving of such punishment; indeed the latter is the natural and necessary result of the former. What wretched disingenuity, to love the world more than God, that is, to love him not at all!—to prostitute the bounty of your sovereign to the purpose of dethroning him! a crime that wants a name for it. And how is it pos-

a Phil. iv. 6.

sible that a soul thus depraved should be happy. Such depravity, if not cured, necessarily brings after it misery.—How vain then are all your desires, your expectations, and your exertions! O that we could convince you of your folly and sin! O that we could stop you in your mad career!

But their conduct, who, under a profession of religion, make the world their object, is still more preposterous, base, and ruinous. What! will you, having heard the word, and to appearance received it into your hearts, suffer the briers and thorns to grow up with the seed and choke it? yea, more than this, cherish the noxious weeds of detestable avarice? If so, what may you reasonably expect, as the fruit of this your baseness and perfidy, but disappointment and sorrow in this world, and the wrath of God in that to come? Can you wonder, 'resolving (at all adventures to be rich,) that you fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition? For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows *a*.' Hear, O hear with solemn attention, the sentence of provoked justice and abused mercy denounced upon you. 'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire *b*.' Would to God we could awaken you to repentance ere it is too late!

But while we are dissuading men from the love of the world, have we no object to hold up to their view of superior value and excellence, to captivate their attention, and engage their pursuit? We have. Hear the voice of Wisdom, listen to the gracious entreaties of him who has immense wealth at his disposal, and a heart freely to bestow it on all who in earnest seek it: *I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause*

a 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. *b* James v. 1—3.

those that love me, to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures a. I have only now to address myself in a few words,

3. To the *voluptuous.*

The pleasures of the world are your object. But let me beseech you to consider a moment the extreme folly, sin, and danger of indulging this passion. It sensualizes the mind, and renders it incapable of those intellectual improvements and refined pleasures for which it was originally formed. It debases men to the rank of the brute creation. It brings them into contempt among the wise, virtuous, and good. It robs them of their time, which was given them for the important purposes of glorifying God, serving their generation, and preparing for another world. It precipitates them into extravagances which often prove fatal, not only to their character, but their worldly prosperity, and their very existence. It brings a tremendous load of guilt upon their consciences, arms death with invincible terrors, and plunges them in all the miseries of that world, where this passion cannot be gratified, and where there is not a drop of water to cool the parched tongue. For the truth of what we thus affirm, we appeal to the dictates of sound reason, to the sentence of Scripture, to the united testimony of all wise and good men, to your own painful feelings in an hour of satiety and disgust, and to the concessions and exclamations of an infinite multitude of profligate sinners in the decline of life, and at the hour of death. Nor can you wonder that such should be the effect of the lawless gratification of brutal appetites and passions. How fit that men should *eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices b.* How fit that they who have been *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God c,* should *lie down in sorrow d,* and *mourn at the last, when their flesh and their body are consumed e.*

Let me then beseech you, O ye who have been hitherto *given to pleasures f,* and have *lived deliciously g,* seriously to consider these things. Why should you throw the reins upon the neck of your lusts, and wilfully resolve upon your own ruin? Why should you tempt down the vengeance of almighty God upon your head, by ungratefully abusing the bounty of his providence?

a Prov. viii. 17—21. *b* Prov. i. 31. *c* 2 Tim. iii. 4. *d* Isa. l. 11.
e Prov. v. 11. *f* Isa. xlvii. 8. *g* Rev. xviii. 7.

Is suicide no sin? Are the pleasures of sense a valuable consideration for the loss of the soul? But if after all our remonstrances and expostulations, ye are determined *to walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes, know ye that for all these things God will bring you into judgment* a.

Thus would we fain stem the torrent of this wretched insanity, bring men to their senses, and convince them that by an excessive love of pleasure they are entailing upon themselves substantial misery. But do we mean to annihilate all idea of pleasure, and to throw every possible obstruction in your way to happiness?—that would be cruel indeed! No. The reverse is our object. We wish to persuade you of a plain and most interesting truth, attested by the word of God, and the experience of the best of men, that religion is true wisdom, and that *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace* b. Her form is most beautiful, however she may have been misrepresented by prejudice, and her counsels most soft and engaging, however rejected by a vain world. *She hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding* c. O may you be persuaded to accept of her generous invitation, and to partake of this delicious entertainment—an entertainment prepared at an expense that surpasses all human imagination! So will you be convinced, by your own happy experience, that he who renounces the pleasures of sin for the pleasures of religion, makes an exchange to his unspeakable advantage in the present life, as well as his infinite emolument in the world to come.

PART II.

'SOME seeds,' our Saviour tells us in the text, 'fell among thorns: and the thorns sprung up and choked them.' This figurative account of the WORLDLY-MINDED HEARER we have

a Eccl. xi. 9. b Prov. iii. 17. c Prov. ix. 1—6.

explained, assisted by our Lord's own exposition of it in the following words, *He that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word: and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful*, ver. 22. The man of this character receives the word, professes it, and for some considerable time, if not to the end of his life, perseveres in his profession. He is, however, unfruitful. The causes of his unfruitfulness are now under consideration. These our Lord hath particularly mentioned, namely, the *cares, riches*, and *pleasures* of the world. Of each of these we have proposed therefore to give some general account—to shew you how an undue attention to them obstructs the operation of God's word on the heart—and to represent to you the sad event of such intimate commerce with the world. The first was the subject of the former sermon; and we go on,

II. To inquire how the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world operate to prevent the salutary effects of God's word on the hearts of men.

There is no profiting by the word we hear without duly weighing and considering it. Now there are three things necessary to our practising the great duty of consideration with effect—*Leisure*—*Composure*—and *Inclination* to the business. But the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world deprive men of all these, or at least make considerable encroachments on them.

FIRST—*Leisure.*

Ground choked with briers and thorns affords not room for the seed cast upon it to expand and grow. In like manner he whose attention is wholly taken up with secular affairs, has not leisure for consideration. He can scarce find time for hearing the word, much less for reading the Bible, meditating on divine truths, and examining his heart. And however good men, when employed about their worldly business, can every now and then advert to the concerns of their souls, and frequently, in the course of the day, dart an affectionate prayer to heaven, it is quite otherwise with the unhappy man whose case we are describing. Each avenue of his heart is so closely occupied by the world, that not a serious thought can enter, except by stealth or surprise.

Say, you who are oppressed with the cares, or absorbed in

the pleasures of life, whether this is not the fact? What is it first catches your imagination when you awake in the morning? What is it engrosses your attention all the day? What is it goes with you to your bed, and follows you through the restless hours of night? What is it you are constantly thinking of at home, abroad, and in the house of God? It is the world. O sad! Not a day, not an hour, scarce a moment in reserve for a meditation on God, your soul, and an eternal world! And can religion exist where it is never thought of, or gain ground in a heart where it is but now and then adverted to? As well might a man expect to live without sustenance, or get strong without digesting his food. That then which deprives men of time for consideration is essentially injurious to religion. And such is the charge our Saviour exhibits against the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world: for the truth of which we appeal not only to the bulk of mankind, but to multitudes who profess religion, and flatter themselves with a notion that they are in the fair way to heaven.

Time is the gift of God, a boon of inestimable value: what pity it should be abused or trifled with! I say not that it is to be wholly employed in meditation and devotion. That man mistakes religion who, under a notion of exalted piety, turns his back on the world, and retires into obscurity. There is a time for every thing under the sun. A time for prudent consideration about our temporal interests; a time for honest labour, to procure a subsistence, and to acquire a competence; a time for food and sleep; and a time for recreation and amusement. We may enjoy what God has given us, as well as labour for it.

But upon what principle is religion to be deprived of its just claims? If it is the most important of all concerns, and if it cannot be forwarded without consideration and prayer, it has a just title to a convenient share of our time for those purposes. God has appointed one day in seven for our repose and his worship, and shall worldly anxieties and pleasures defraud both him and us of our right? He hath required us to allot a portion of each day for the devotion of the family and closet, and shall this portion though small be avariciously engrossed by secular affairs? It is the voice of reason, that our thoughts should every now and then advert to the concerns of our souls; and shall the per-

plexing cares and vain amusements of life cruelly exact of us every moment that passes? What are such horrid depredations as these on time better than sacrilege? and what the tamely submitting to them than suicide!—But to proceed. The world not only deprives men of time and opportunity for consideration, but also,

SECONDLY,—Of *Composure.*

By *composure* I mean that calmness or self-possession, whereby we are enabled to attend soberly and without interruption to the business we are about. Consideration implies this in it: for how is it possible that a man should duly consider a subject, whether civil or religious, coolly reason upon it, and thoroughly enter into the spirit of it, if his mind is all the while occupied with a thousand other things foreign to the matter before him? In order therefore to our doing justice to any question of importance, we must rid our minds of all impertinent thoughts, be self-collected, and fix our attention steadily to the point. How difficult this is I need not say. Studious people feel the difficulty; and in regard of religion, the best of men are sensible of their weakness in this respect, and deeply lament it. But where the world gains the ascendent this difficulty is increased, and in some instances becomes almost insuperable. Let me here describe to you, in a few words, the almost incessant hurry and confusion of their minds, who answer to the three characters in our text, of the *careful*, the *covetous*, and the *voluptuous*. So you will clearly see how impossible it is for persons thus circumstanced, to pay that attention to religious subjects which is necessary in order to their being profited by them.

1. The case of him who is swallowed up with the anxious cares of life, is truly lamentable.

It is not riches the unhappy man aims at, but a competence, or perhaps a mere subsistence. The dread of being reduced with his family to extreme poverty, harrows up his very soul. The horrid spectres of contempt, famine, and a prison, haunt his imagination. He fancies himself turned out of his dwelling, his substance torn from him by merciless creditors, his children crying for bread, and he and they just on the point of starving. To escape these miseries, or to hold them at a distance, he racks his invention, exerts all his powers, and allows himself scarce time to eat or sleep. These sad thoughts, engendered by

gloominess and timidity, strengthened by a sinful distrust of Providence, and promoted by the artful suggestions of Satan, follow him day and night, embarrass his mind, prey upon his spirits, and make him wretched to the last degree. Like a distracted man, now he is looking this way, and then that; now making a fruitless effort, and then on the point of giving up all for lost. How deplorable this state of the mind!

And how incapable is the man thus circumstanced of coolly thinking on the great things of religion! Does he attempt in his retirement to fix his attention to some divine subject? he instantly fails in the attempt; cares, like a wild deluge, rush in upon his soul, and break all the measures he had taken to obtain a little respite from his trouble. Does he go down upon his knees to pray? he has scarce uttered a sentence, before he is thrown into confusion by disordered thoughts and wandering imaginations; so that the dread of affronting God by offering the sacrifice of idols, obliges him to desist. Does he go to the house of God? thither his anxieties follow him, stand like so many sentinels at each avenue of his soul, to shut out all instruction from his ear, and all comfort from his heart; so that he goes from thence as uninformed and unhappy as he came thither. Thus do the cares of the world choke the word, and choke the man himself, as Luke expresses it: like thorns and briers, they pierce and suffocate him, at once torment his heart, and enfeeble his powers. And though they may not, in every instance, proceed to the lengths we have represented, yet it is easy to imagine, from what has been said, how they prove, in cases less distressing, mighty obstructions to the salutary effect of the word on the heart.

2. The like effect hath an *eager desire after riches*, to disqualify men for consideration.

Avaricious desires may not indeed be attended with the anguish just described, yet they no less effectually disable the powers of the soul for the right discharge of religious duties. Wealth becoming a man's object, and its deceitful charms getting fast hold on his heart, the prize will be continually in his eye, and the means of acquiring it engross all his thoughts. His speculations, reasonings, deliberations, and efforts will all be directed to this point. Now he is laying his

plan, adjusting each circumstance, considering their various and united effect, and providing for all contingencies that may arise and thwart his views. And then you see him carrying his plans into execution, with unremitting ardour, setting each engine at work, and looking forward with eager expectation to the event. If he succeeds, his passion for wealth collects fresh strength, and, without allowing him to pause a while to enjoy the fruit of his labour, pushes him on to some further exertion. If he fails, the failure stimulates him to some bolder enterprise. And thus he is employed from day to day; his thoughts incessantly wandering from one object of sense to another, his invention perpetually on the rack, and his passions, like the raging sea, in a continual agitation.

Now, amidst this tumult of the mind, how can a man think soberly of the great truths and duties of religion, of the state of his soul, and the concerns of another world? If we could suppose him in the least degree well affected to religion, (which indeed is scarce imaginable) it were yet almost impossible for him to pay proper attention to it. Perhaps the form is not wholly laid aside; but what is it more than a form? *He draweth nigh to God with his mouth, and honoureth him with his lips, but his heart is far from him a.* When on his knees he is still in the world; when he is worshipping God in his family, he is still pursuing his gain. His closet is an accompting-house, and his church an exchange. Surely then our Lord knew what he said, when, to the astonishment of his disciples he affirmed, that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God *b*.'—From what has been said it is easy to see also,

3. How an eager attention to *worldly pleasures* must have the like effect, to render the mind incapable of serious consideration.

Scenes of splendour, gaiety, and sensual delight, are ever before the eyes of men of this character. Their thoughts are incessantly employed about these objects, realizing the fancied bliss they have in prospect before it is actually enjoyed, devising the necessary means of acquiring it, pressing on to it with ardent desire, grudging every moment that holds them back from

a Matt. xv. 8. *b* Mark x. 25.

it, and reckoning no time too long for the possession of what they account the chief good.

And what is the effect in regard of religion? Do these sons of pleasure vouchsafe at any time to present themselves among the sons of God in the temple of devotion? One may easily imagine what kind of offering they bring with them; not that of a willing heart, but of an hour sequestered against the will from their extravagant pursuits. Do they ever retire for a few moments to read and pray? One may affirm, though not admitted into the secret counsels of their hearts, that they read without understanding, and pray without devotion. For how is it possible that a mind thus hurried, thus dissipated, thus intoxicated with vain amusements, should be capable of thinking soberly of God and a future world, of death, judgment, and eternity! Communion with heaven amidst this riot of the mind, would be a greater solecism than philosophising at a feast of Bacchus, or demonstrating a problem at a masquerade. But I forbear.—There remains one thing more to be considered, in order to shew how the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life operate, to prevent the salutary effect of the word on the heart. They not only deprive men of time and composure for serious consideration, but,

THIRDLY,—Of all *Inclination* to it.

Where indeed the love of the world prevails, let a man's profession be ever so splendid, there is no real religion; so that such an one neither has, nor ever had a disposition to serious consideration. But what I mean, is, to shew that an eager attention to the things of this life confirms the habit of inconsideration, and tends, where there is an aptitude to meditation, to weaken and deprave it. A mind wholly occupied with the objects of sense, is not only estranged from the great realities of religion, but averse to them. As it has neither leisure nor calmness for sublime contemplations, so it has no taste or relish for them. *The carnal mind is enmity against God* [a]. And the more carnal it grows by incessant commerce with the world, the more does that prejudice and enmity increase. What violence are such men obliged to put upon themselves, if at any time, by some extraordinary circumstance, they are prevailed on to think

[a] Rom. viii. 7.

of the concerns of their souls! The business is not only awkward, as they are unaccustomed to it, but it is exceeding irksome and painful. And something of this good men themselves feel, when captivated for a while by the cares and pursuits of the world. What a strange backwardness do they complain of to holy and devout exercises! In their slumbers, though not fallen into a deep sleep, they have little heart for those vigorous exercises of the mind which a rapid progress in religion demands. *They have put off their coat*, as the church expresses it in the Songs of Solomon *a*, *and how shall they put it on!*

Now, if a hearty inclination to any business is necessary to a man's considering it, and so being in a capacity to pursue it with attention and success, whatever tends to abate that inclination, or to confirm the opposite aversion, is essentially injurious to such business. In like manner, with respect to the great concerns of religion, the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world, by wholly occupying the mind, indispose it to consideration, and so choke the word and render it unfruitful.—And now this leads us to consider,

III. The sad event of such undue commerce with the world. The unhappy man not having leisure, calmness, or inclination to attend to the word; neither understands it, believes it, nor is obedient to it; and continuing in this wretched state of ignorance, impenitence, and unbelief, he is finally lost.

1. He understands not the word of the kingdom.

And indeed how should he, taken up as he almost constantly is with thinking, reasoning, and caring about other matters! Or if he has a speculative acquaintance with the truths of religion, it is not, it cannot be experimental and practical. Ah! how ignorant is he of God, his perfections, ways, and works! of himself, his capacities and interests, his true state and condition, the plague of his heart, and the danger to which he is exposed! of Christ, the glories of his person, redemption, and kingdom! of the beauty of holiness, the refined pleasures of religion, and the joys and triumphs of heaven! These are things which the objects of sense thrust far away from his view, so that he seldom if ever spends a thought about them. And however sagacious he is in the management of his temporal affairs, he is a perfect

a Chap. v. 3.

fool in his conceptions and reasonings about matters of infinitely greater moment. Like a wretch immured in a cell he contents himself with viewing, by the help of a glimmering taper, the childish figures his fancy has chalked out around him; while the man of wisdom walks in the light of broad day, viewing the stupendous works of God, by the aid of that great luminary the Sun of Righteousness, to his infinite joy and emolument.—And as he understands not the word of the kingdom, so—

2. Neither does he believe it.

It is not his professing it that proves he believes it. Nor does his admitting it all to be true, in the cold, lifeless manner of the generality of people, constitute him a believer in the sense of the New Testament. No; he who believes the gospel to the salvation of his soul, must enter into the spirit of it. But how can that man be supposed to have entered into the spirit of the gospel, of whose heart the god of this world has taken quiet possession? To a mind wherein this wretched demon lives, reigns, and domineers, the faith as well as the knowledge of divine truth is an utter stranger. And O how deplorable the character!—to profess the faith, and at the same time to be no better than an infidel!—to take pains to persuade himself and all about him that he believes, and yet to remain under the dominion of unbelief and sin!—Again,

3. Not rightly understanding or believing the word of the kingdom, he is not obedient to it.

Fruit is not to be expected from seed sown among thorns, at least not good fruit, or much of it. The ears will be, like those in Pharaoh's dream, thin, withered, and blasted with the east wind. So Luke expressly says *a*, he *brings no fruit to perfection.* If you look for *the fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance b*, you will be miserably disappointed. None of these divine graces live in his heart, and shine in his life: at best you will discover only the bare semblance of them, a kind of fruit unpleasing to the eye, and disgusting to the taste. Amidst the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world, the faint, dwindling, impotent efforts of something like religion, are quickly suffocated and lost.—Here perhaps it will be expected, that

a Chap. viii. 14. *b* Gal. v. 22, 23.

we enter into a particular consideration of this beautiful and striking expression of our Saviour's, *they bring no fruit to perfection:* but as it will be the business of the next discourse, to give a particular account of the nature and quality of the fruit required of every genuine Christian, we shall enlarge no further here.—And now,

4. And *lastly*, What is the final issue of all? Why, the man himself, as well as the seed, is choked; for so Luke expresses it *a*.

And Oh! how sad, after a profession protracted to a considerable length, not renounced by avowed apostacy, or disgraced by any gross act of immorality; to miss of heaven and all its joys and triumphs, and *to be turned into hell with the wicked, and all the nations that forget God b!* O tremendous, to receive the curse of the barren fig-tree from his lips whose name you have professed! to be driven like chaff before the wind! and not having brought forth good fruit, to be hewn down and cast into the fire!

Thus have we considered the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world; their operation on that class of hearers our Lord means here to describe; and the sad event of all. Let us now close the whole with some seasonable exhortations.

1. Let the professors of religion have no more to do with the world than duty clearly requires.

This is sound, wholesome, scriptural advice. The Bible does not teach us to affect preciseness and singularity, to assume a severe, gloomy, ascetic countenance and manners, and peevishly to withdraw ourselves from society and the civil concerns of life; yet surely it does require more of us than escaping the gross pollutions of the world, and the preserving a good, sober, moral character. Otherwise I know not what tolerable rational account to give of the following precepts: 'If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me *c*.' 'Whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God *d*.' 'Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind *e*.' 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing *f*.'

a Chap. viii. 14. *b* Psal. ix. 17. *c* Matt. xvi. 24.
d James iv. 4. *e* Rom. xii. 2. *f* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.—See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise *a*.' 'Abstain from all appearance of evil *b*.' A Christian, especially if he be a good-natured man, is in greater danger from compliances of a doubtful ill tendency, than from temptations to direct immoralities. The latter he will know how easily to resist, while the former may prove a snare to him before he is aware. Heaven is the good man's object; and in order to imbibe a spirit suited to that state, he will find the discipline of the heart a necessary and painful business; but how that can be carried on amidst the drudgery of avaricious pursuits, or the levity of vain amusements, I am at a loss to say. Let us then *endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ;* and as we wish to please him who has chosen us to be soldiers, let us take heed how *we entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life c.*

2. If thorns, before we are aware, get in, let us instantly root them out.

The best of men are exposed to temptation, and too often foiled, though not overcome by it. The Christian like an eagle soars to heaven, yet his flight may on a sudden be impeded by the grossness of the atmosphere through which he passes; and though, like that prince of birds, he has an eye that can look at the sun, yet his eye may for a moment be captivated by the false glare of terrestrial objects. But he will quickly, animated by the grace of God, turn away his eye from beholding vanity, and with redoubled vigour renew his flight to heaven. He has a taste for sublime enjoyments, and that taste, though it may be in a degree vitiated, cannot be wholly lost.

Consider then, O men of God, your high character and noble birth. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called. Demean yourselves in a manner becoming your holy profession and glorious prospects. If the objects of sense, before you are aware, catch your attention, and captivate your passions, disentangle yourselves as quickly as possible from the charm; hesitate not a moment; exert all the power of Christian resolution; tear up by the roots the briers and thorns of worldly cares, and the poisonous weeds of fascinating pleasures; they are of luxuriant growth, and if not instantly checked, and by severe dis-

a Eph. v. 11, 15. *b* 1 Thess. v. 22. *c* 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

cipline destroyed, they will overspread the heart, choke every pious sentiment and virtuous affection, and in the end create you infinite trouble and anguish. No time is to be lost. The farther you advance in a course of life, which, though not directly criminal, yet tends to embarrass your mind, weaken your graces, and indispose you to the duties of religion, the more difficult will be your retreat. Oh! how have some good men, in the close of life, lamented in the bitterness of their spirit the advantage which the world has gained over them; and warned those about them to beware of the encroachments, which this insidious enemy imperceptibly makes upon the human heart!

3. Receive the good seed.

It is not enough that the ground is cleared of noxious weeds, if it be not sown with the proper grain. Neither is it sufficient to guard against the corrupt maxims, customs, and manners of the world, if our hearts are not impregnated with divine truth. What that is we have already shewn you. It is *the word of the kingdom*, the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. We exhort you therefore to hear the word diligently, to take pains to understand it, to yield a cordial assent to it, to lay it up in your memories, and to revolve it frequently in your minds. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom a. Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls b.* And be assured *it will build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified c.*

An experimental acquaintance with the gospel is the best mean to fortify the heart against the assaults of the world. Reason and observation every now and then extort from our lips a cold feeble acknowledgment, that the riches, honours, and pleasures of this life are uncertain and unsatisfying; yet, alas, they still cling about our hearts, disturb the peace of our minds, and obstruct our progress towards heaven. But a believing contemplation on divine truth, fixes such a deep conviction in our bosoms of the vanity of the world, as fails not to interest our warmest passions, and so to have a commanding influence on our conduct. In those happy moments the world appears very little indeed, just such a trifling object as it is in the eye

a Col. iii. 16. b James i. 21. c Acts xx. 32.

of him, who apprehends himself passing out of time into eternity.

Go then, Christian, to the cross of Christ, fix your eye on the suffering Saviour, contemplate his character, and well consider the infinitely benevolent intent of what he endured: and sure I am you will cry out in the language of the great apostle, *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world a.* It is not imaginable how the thorns and briers of worldly cares and pleasures, should get ground in a heart where the word of the kingdom thus takes deep root, spreads on every side, and gains new strength and vigour every day. The reasonings of mere philosophy will have little effect to combat the stubborn propensities of the heart to the world, and to elevate the soul to God. But the sublime truths of Christianity, accompanied with a divine energy, will not fail to compass these great objects.

Let me then beseech you, Christians, beseech all that hear me, to listen to the voice of divine wisdom, to hang attentively on her lips, to receive her doctrine, and accept her gracious invitations. She bids us to an entertainment the most free, expensive, and delicious; entertainment that will not fail to please our taste, cheer our spirits, and strengthen our hearts. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David *b*.'

4. And *lastly*, Look to God for his blessing.

'Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but it is God that giveth the increase *c*.' We may hear, read, meditate, reflect, watch, and use many good endeavours; but if no regard be had to a superior influence, all will be vain. The world hath so many ways of insinuating itself into our affections, the great

a Gal. vi. 14. *b* Isa. lv. 1—3. *c* 1 Cor. iii. 6.

enemy of mankind is so insidious and malevolent, and our hearts are so vain and treacherous, that if God be not with us, we shall be quickly foiled and overcome.

Trust not then, Christian, your own sagacity, resolution, and strength. Many have done so, and been made ashamed. Prayer is your refuge. O! pray without ceasing. Implore the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit; weep and make supplication, as did Jacob, to the angel of the covenant; resolve with him, that you will not leave him except he bless you. Such importunity, accompanied as it always is with circumspection and obedience, will succeed; and how glorious the success! He is faithful that hath promised. 'My grace is sufficient for thee *a*.' 'The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint *b*.' 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing: to shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him *c*.'

DISCOURSE V.

THE CHARACTER OF SINCERE HEARERS CONSIDERED.

MATT. XIII. 8.—*But other [seeds] fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit; some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.*

IT is one, among many other striking proofs of the divinity of our Saviour's mission, that the treatment his gospel meets with in the world, exactly corresponds with his own predictions. In the parable under our consideration he tells his apostles, that some would pay little or no attention to it; that others, receiving it

a 2 Cor. xii. 9. *b* Isa. xl. 30, 31. *c* Psal. xcii. 13—15.

with great appearance of zeal, would, after a while, upon some offence taken, renounce it; and that a third sort of persons, having more dispassionately professed the Christian name, would in a course of time, through a too intimate connection with the world, grow indifferent to their profession, and fail of attaining the great object of it—eternal life.

These three distinct characters we have considered under the several denominations of the INATTENTIVE—the ENTHUSIASTIC—the WORLDLY-MINDED. And I presume the view we have taken of the disingenuous temper, criminal conduct, and final punishment of these unhappy persons, hath deeply affected our hearts. But a scene of a different kind now opens to our view. Although the ministers of this gospel are *a savour of death unto death* to multitudes who hear it, yet they are to many others *a savour of life unto life a.* And we may depend upon it, that God will not forget his gracious promise: *My word that goeth forth out of my mouth, shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it b.*

Many there are then who hear the word of the kingdom, and are thereby made wise unto salvation. The character of these happy persons we are now to consider, and shall style them, by way of distinction from the former, the SINCERE, that is, genuine Christians. The text says, *Other* [*seeds*] *fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.*

Ground within an enclosure, and properly manured, is better fitted to receive seed than that on the way-side, in stony places, or in the hedges. Seed sown here at the proper season, and by a skilful hand, will be likely to mingle with the soil, and, under the genial influence of the sun and the falling dew and rain, to spring up and bring forth fruit. But the produce, through a variety of circumstances too numerous to be mentioned, will, on some lands, and in some countries, be more considerable than others. Such is the figure in our text.

Our Saviour's exposition of this part of the parable, you have in the 23d verse—'He that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, which also

a 2 Cor. ii. 16. b Isa. lv. 11

'beareth fruit, and bringeth forth some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.' Luke expresses it somewhat differently *a*, —'That on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.'

The first thing that strikes us here is,

1. That these hearers have *honest and good hearts.* The ground must be properly manured and prepared, before the seed can so mingle with it as to produce fruit. In like manner, the powers of the soul must be renewed by divine grace, before the instructions of God's word can so incorporate with them as to become fruitful. The heart which was prone to deceive, flatter, and impose upon itself, must be made sincere and honest. And the heart which was hard, conceited, and self-willed, must become soft, humble, and teachable. Now, the metaphor thus explained, gives us a two-fold view of the word of God, as the mean or instrument of men's conversion, and as the seed implanted in their hearts from whence the fruits of obedience proceed. And this account of the matter very well agrees with what we meet with in other passages of Scripture, as particularly in the Epistle of James *b*, where God is said 'of his own will to beget us with the word of truth;' and in a few verses afterwards, we are represented as 'receiving with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.' And it agrees too with the fact; for it frequently so happens, that men who come to the house of God unprepared, and with hearts neither honest nor good, are yet, by the preaching of the word, accompanied with a divine energy, convinced and converted. Their understanding is illuminated, and a new bent is given to their will.—So,

2. They *hear the word* after a different manner, and to a very different purpose from what others do, and from what they themselves formerly did. They hear it with attention, candour, meekness, and simplicity;—and then, to go on with our Saviour's account of these hearers, they—

3. *Understand the word.*

This is not expressly said, as I remember, of either of the former characters. They indeed who are destitute of the grace

a Chap. viii. 15. *b* Chap. i. 18.

of God, may have a speculative acquaintance with the gospel; but mingling their own vain conceits with it, and not being sensible of its importance, nor imbibing its true spirit, they are to all valuable purposes ignorant of it. This however is not the case with real Christians. They have a right understanding of the gospel. It is in their idea the most simple, and at the same time the most interesting thing in the world; easy to be apprehended, and yet full of infinite majesty and glory. Their knowledge is, in short, experimental and practical.

4. They *keep the word.* The seed once lodged in the heart remains there. It is not caught away by the wicked one, it is not destroyed by the scorching beams of persecution, nor is it choked by the thorns of worldly cares and pleasures. It is laid up in the understanding, memory, and affections, and guarded with attention and care, as the most invaluable treasure. And indeed how is it imaginable that the man who has received the truth in the love of it, has ventured his everlasting all on it, and has no other ground of hope whatever, should be willing to part with this good word of the grace of God! Sooner would he renounce his dearest temporal enjoyments, yea, even life itself. Nor does our Saviour by *keeping the word*, mean only, an attachment to the leading truths of Christianity, and which may therefore with emphasis be called *the word;* he intends also a due regard to all the instructions and precepts of the Bible, the whole revealed will of God. *O that my ways*, says David *a*, *were directed to keep thy statutes!* And our Lord frequently exhorts his disciples to express their love to him, by *keeping his commandments*, and observing his sayings *b*.—Again,

5. They *bring forth fruit.* The seed springs up, looks green, and promises a fair harvest. They profess the Christian name, and live answerable to it. Their external conduct is sober, useful, and honourable; and their temper is pious, benevolent, and holy. The fruit they bear is of the same nature with the seed whence it springs. Their obedience is regulated by the word of God, as its rule; and flows from divine principles, such as faith, hope, and love, implanted in their hearts. But of these things we shall treat more largely hereafter.

a Psal. cxix. 5. *b* John xiv. 15, 25.

6. They bring forth fruit *with patience.* It is a considerable time before the seed disseminates, rises into the stalk and the ear, and ripens into fruit. It usually meets with many checks in its progress, through inclement weather and other unfavourable circumstances. So that *the husbandman*, as the apostle James says *a*, *waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* And thus is aptly signified the gradual progress of religion in the heart, the opposition it meets with from various quarters, and the resolution, self-denial, and perseverance necessary to the Christian character.—In one word,

7. And *lastly*, They bring forth fruit in different degrees, *some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.* They are none of them unfruitful, but the produce is more or less, agreeable to the kind of soil, the means of cultivation, and the difference of the seasons.

The amount of the whole is this, Those hearers who are sincere, will derive real profit from the word, and give clear proof they do so, by bringing forth fruit, in various degrees, to the glory of God and their own everlasting advantage. And now in order to the fully discussing this argument, we shall,

I. Shew the necessity of men's hearts being made honest and good, in order to their profiting by the word they hear:

II. Describe the kind of fruit which persons of this character bear, and which furnishes incontestable proof that they are benefited by the word:

III. Consider the variety there is in regard of degrees of fruitfulness, and the reasons of it: and,

IV. Represent the blessedness of such persons, which, though not directly expressed, is yet implied in the general purport of the parable.

I. As to the necessity of the heart's being made honest and good, in order to men's duly receiving the word and keeping it, this will clearly appear on a little reflection.

I suppose it will scarce be denied, that the will and affections have a considerable influence on the operations of the understanding and judgment. To a mind, therefore, under the tyranny of pride and pleasure, positions that are hostile to these

a Chap. v. 7.

passions will not easily gain admission. Their first appearance will create prejudice. And if that prejudice does not instantly preclude all consideration, it will yet throw insuperable obstructions in the way of impartial inquiry. If it does not absolutely put out the eye of reason, it will yet raise such dust before it as will effectually prevent its perceiving the object. What men do not care to believe, they will take pains to persuade themselves is not true. They will employ all their ingenuity to find out objections; and having cast them with great eagerness into the opposite scale to positive unexamined evidence, will at length pronounce confidently against the truth, and in favour of error. Such is the manner of the world, and thus do men impose upon themselves in a thousand questions, civil and religious, which thwart their inclinations.

Now the gospel (if the account we have given of it be true) is most humiliating to the pride of the human heart, and most disgusting to that inordinate passion for worldly pleasure which prevails there. Why then should it be thought strange, that men of this character should be violently precipitated by their prejudices into false and dangerous reasonings? To these causes we may, without breach of charity, impute a great deal, if not the whole of that opposition the gospel meets with in the world. Hence the cross of Christ became to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And hence multitudes in our time, upon the first hearing the gospel, are offended, and with the men of Capernaum, say, *These are hard sayings, who can hear them?*

If then the word of the kingdom be received and kept in the manner it ought, the heart must be first made honest and good. When once a new bias is given to the will and affections, and a man from a proud becomes a humble man, from a lover of this world a lover of God, his prejudices against the gospel will instantly subside. The thick vapours exhaled from a sensual heart, which had obscured his understanding, will disperse, and the light of divine truth shine in upon him with commanding evidence. He will receive the truth in the love of it. The method of salvation by a crucified Jesus, will become highly pleasing to him; and all the little objections which originated not in sound reason, but in disaffection and perverseness, will

vanish. And so that divine saying of our Saviour's will be found to be true, *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*

How important then is regeneration! How earnestly should we pray to God to renew our will! And what pains should we take with ourselves, to subdue our stubborn prejudices and passions! Thus *laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receiving with meekness the ingrafted word,* we shall find it *able to save our souls a.* The seed thus sown in the understanding, thus insinuating itself into the heart, and thus mingling with the affections, will not fail to spring up, and in due time bring forth fruit.—This leads us,

II. To describe the kind of fruit which such persons will bear. It is good fruit—fruit of the same nature with the seed whence it grows, and the soil with which it is incorporated: of the same nature with the gospel itself which is received in faith, and with those holy principles which are infused by the blessed Spirit.

Here let us dwell a little more particularly on the nature and tendency of the gospel. 'God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them *b.*' No less a person than his own Son he devotes to death for their sakes. This great sacrifice he exhibits to the view of the whole creation, as the most striking spectacle of his just resentment against sin, and the most sure pledge of his tender compassion to the guilty. The merit of this divine Saviour he accepts. The plea he admits in bar of the sentence that hung over the head of the devoted criminal. *Deliver him,* says he, *from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.* He absolves him, he justifies him, he makes him everlastingly happy. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died c.* So *grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord d.* O how inflexible the justice, how venerable the holiness, and how boundless the goodness of God!

And if this be the gospel, who can hesitate a moment upon the question respecting its natural and proper tendency? Who will dare assert, that it is not a doctrine according to godliness?

a James i. 21. *b* 2 Cor. v. 19. *c* Rom. viii. 33, 34. *d* Rom. v. 21.

that it does not teach and enforce the purest and most sublime morality? What man who believes it can admit a doubt, with the divine character thus held up to his view, whether he ought supremely to revere, love, and obey the blessed God? How can piety languish and die, amidst this scene of wonders? How can the heart, occupied with these sentiments, remain unsusceptible to the feelings of justice, truth, humanity, and benevolence? How can a man believe himself to be that guilty depraved helpless wretch which this gospel supposes him to be, and not be humble? How can he behold the Creator of the world expiring in agonies on the cross, and follow him thence a pale breathless corpse to the tomb, and not feel a sovereign contempt for the pomps and vanities of this transitory state? How can he, in a word, see him rising from the dead, triumphing over the powers of darkness, and ascending amid the shouts of angels up into heaven; how can he, I say, be a spectator of all these scenes, and remain indifferent to his everlasting interests? We appeal then to the common sense of mankind, whether the scheme of salvation, thus exquisitely constructed, is not adapted to promote the interests of piety and holiness? It is as evident as that the sun was created to give light and heat to our world; and the earth made fruitful, to afford food and nourishment to those who inhabit it.

But to bring the matter more fully home to the point before us, What kind of a man is the real Christian? Let us contemplate his character, and consider what is the general course of his life. Instructed in this divine doctrine, and having his heart made honest and good, he will be a man of piety, integrity, and purity. The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, will teach him *to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* a.

As to piety; a due regard to the authority of the blessed God, will have a commanding influence upon his temper and practice. With that great Being in his eye, he will aim to discharge the duties of religious worship, public and private, with sincerity, attention, and devotion. Remembering the allegiance he owes to his sovereign, he will tremble at the idea of offending him; and calling to mind the various expressions of his bounty, he

a Tit. ii. 11, 12.

will feel holy joy in every effort to please him. Relying on his pardoning mercy through Christ, he will ingenuously repent of his sins, and cordially return to his duty. When contemplating his excellencies, he will revere him; when enjoying the tokens of his favour, he will delight in him; when chastened by his afflicting hand, he will submit to him; when assaulted by temptation, he will confide in him; and when employed by him in any difficult and arduous service, he will rely on his gracious assistance.

As to social duties; his conduct will be governed by the rule his divine Master has laid down, of doing to others as he would have them do to him. He will be just in his dealings, faithful to his engagements, and sincere in his friendships. He will aim to live on terms of peace with all, be cautious of giving offence to any, and gladly interpose his best offices, when required, to extinguish the flames of contention wherever they are kindled. He will feel with the afflicted, and rejoice to have it in his power to smooth the brow of adversity, and to pour consolation into the bosom of the sorrowful. To a mean and base action, he will be nobly superior, and in acts of generosity and kindness his heart will exult. A stranger to sullen reserve and corroding selfishness, his soul will mingle with kindred souls, and participate largely with others in their pleasures. In a word, by his influence and example he will endeavour to promote the civil, but more especially the spiritual and everlasting interests of mankind.—And then,

As to personal duties; he will use the comforts of life, which he enjoys as the fruits of divine benevolence, with temperance and moderation. The wealth and splendour of the world will not be his object: on the contrary, he will hold them in sovereign contempt, when they dispute the pre-eminence with intellectual and divine joys. Of many gratifications he will deny himself, not only that he may have it in his power to do good to others, but may promote his own best interests, by bringing sense into subjection to reason, and the world into obedience to God. His pride he will endeavour to mortify, by severely studying and censuring his own temper and actions, and by candidly judging and excusing those of others. He will think soberly of himself, as he ought to think. His angry passions

he will restrain and soften, and a spirit of meekness, gentleness, and forbearance he will cultivate to the utmost of his power. In fine, the salvation of his soul will be his grand object, and the care of that will have the preference to every other concern whatever.

Such are the fruits which they bring forth, who hear the word in the manner our Saviour describes, and who keep it in good and honest hearts. *They walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called a*; and their *conversation is as it becometh the gospel of Christ b. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law c.* Of this description were the primitive Christians, and, I trust, there are some such to be met with in our times.

But it is not meant by this description of the Christian to raise him above the rank of humanity, or to give a colouring to the picture which it will not bear. He is still a man, not an angel. To fix the standard of real religion at a mark to which none can arrive, is to do an injury to religion itself, as well as to discourage the hearts of its best friends. Absolute perfection is unattainable in the present life. The best of men have failed in one or other, if not each, of those graces which have been described. Abraham was the father of the faithful, yet his faith was more than once shaken by the violent assaults of unbelief. Jacob had an honest heart, yet there was a time when he dissembled. Job was a pattern of patience, yet in a paroxysm of grief he uttered words that bordered on rebellion. Moses was the meekest man on the earth, yet passion once got the mastery of him. And those mighty champions in the cause of Christianity, the apostles Peter and Paul, were not without their failings, which the Scriptures have faithfully recorded. *In many things we all offend d.* Nor is there a Christian living, however exemplary, but is disposed with all humility to acknowledge, that he every day fails in his duty, and that his best services are disgraced with folly and sin.

But though perfection in the strict sense of the term is not to be admitted, yet the fruit which every real Christian bears is good fruit. It is so denominated by Christ; and such it

a Eph. iv. 1. *b* Phil. i. 27. *c* Gal. v. 22, 23. *d* James iii. 2.

truly is, as it springs from right principles, and is conformable in general to the rule laid down in the word of God. And however the holiness of the best of men must appear infinitely defective to the eye of Omniscience, and therefore can have no merit in it; yet there is a real obvious difference between the character of a man of this world, and that of a genuine disciple of Christ; one who is renewed by the grace of God, and one who is under the power of unbelief and sin.

From this view of the kind of fruit which Christians bring forth, we are led to consider the great variety there is among them in regard of degrees of fruitfulness, and the reasons of it. But this we must refer to another opportunity, and add only a few remarks at present on what has been said.

1. How gracious is that influence which the blessed God exerts to make the heart honest and good, and so dispose it to receive the word and profit by it.

The corruption of human nature is universal, and much greater than superficial reasoners, and those who are little acquainted with themselves, care to admit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Men are set upon criminal indulgences, and are averse to the holy exercises and sublime pleasures of religion. Now, how is a new turn to be given to the mind? How are men to be persuaded cordially to love that which they so much dislike? The reasonings of philosophy, however good, will go but a little way in this business. Yea, the nobler reasonings of the gospel too often prove ineffectual. How gracious then that influence of the Holy Spirit, by which a revolution is brought about in the mind! It was by virtue of this influence that Cornelius became a devout man, and was disposed to send for Peter to preach the gospel to him and his family *a*. It was the Lord that opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken to her by Paul *b*. And it is God, who is rich in mercy, that quickens all those who were once dead in trespasses and sins, but are now alive to God and religion *c*. To that grace, then, by which we are regenerated and saved, let us cheerfully render our noblest tribute of gratitude and praise.

2. From the nature and tendency of the gospel, which has been

a Acts x. *b* Acts xvi. 14. *c* Eph. ii. 1.

just delineated, we derive a strong presumptive evidence of its truth.

The direct positive evidence of prophecy and miracles must have its weight with every considerate person. But when this of the spirit and intent of the gospel is added, it cannot fail of bearing down all opposition before it. We appeal to the common sense of mankind, upon the question respecting the holy tendency of this divine institution. Let men admit or reject the gospel itself, let them enter into the spirit of it, or harbour prejudices against it, still they cannot deny that we have here the purest system of morality, and that it is enforced by motives admirably adapted to touch the noblest feelings of the hearer's heart.

Now, whence could this doctrine, so infinitely beneficial to mankind, come, if not from God? Is it imaginable that Satan would or could change his nature and views, and adopt a plan to emancipate men from his cruel dominion, bring them back to their allegiance to God, and secure to them greater felicity than that of which he had in the beginning deprived them? Is it imaginable that any of his emissaries should have ingenuity enough to devise a scheme so noble, generous, and god-like as this? Or if they had, that they would with mighty zeal forward a design so repugnant to their own character and views? In short, would any man living, at the hazard of his temporal, not to say his eternal interests, take pains to palm on his fellow-creatures a known falsehood, in order to persuade them to be the very opposite to himself, holy, just, and good? Whoever answers these questions in the affirmative, must have a stronger faith than that required to make a man a Christian.

But if we could for a moment suppose the gospel to be a cunningly-devised fable, it were yet worth our while, for the sake of the present advantages which result from the belief of it, to embrace it.

3. Of what importance is it that we converse intimately with the gospel, in order to our bringing forth the fruits of holiness!

Admitting the gospel to be true, the holding back its peculiar glories from our view, under the pretence of their being too mysterious to be apprehended, or too bright to be beheld by the feeble eye of human reason, is not only absurd, but greatly in-

jurious to the cause of real piety and genuine morality. If there be a display of consummate wisdom, transcendent goodness, and immense power, in the contrivance and exebution of the plan of redemption, it was no doubt brought forward to our view in the Scriptures, that it might be considered by us. And the contemplation of it, if no other end was to be answered, must afford divine entertainment to a mind rightly disposed. Are the perfections of Deity more strikingly delineated in the volume of the gospel than in that of nature and providence, and may we not reasonably expect a more sublime pleasure in the study of the former than of the latter? But the main thing is, that there are stronger incentives to be met with here to love and obedience than any where else. And since the arguments to be drawn from natural religion will go but a little way to dispose and animate us to our duty, ought we not to have recourse to those which are of such higher and nobler consideration?

If then we would have our hearts elevated to God by a devotion the most sublime and ecstatic—if we would have our bosoms warmed with affections the most animating and generous—if we would have our wonder, reverence, confidence, gratitude, and delight kindle into a flame—if we would, in a word, be imitators of God, as dear children; let us *with open face behold* in the mirror of the gospel, *the glory of the Lord;* so shall we be *changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* a. Let us dwell in our meditations on this divine doctrine, and cordially embrace those exceeding great and precious promises which are here made us; so shall we be *partakers of the divine nature* b. The soft and tender emotions of ingenuous sorrow for sin, are both pleasant and salutary. If then we would keep alive in our breasts a penitential sense of sin, and a prevailing aversion to it; and if we would enjoy the heartfelt comfort arising from the hope of forgiveness, let us often ascend Mount Calvary, and survey the bleeding cross of the Son of God. Contemplating by faith on his sufferings, our eyes will stream with sorrow and sparkle with joy; we shall at once tremble and rejoice. Would we, again, excel in the social virtues of justice, truth, compassion, benevolence, and friend-

a 2 Cor. iii. 18. b 2 Pet. i. 4.

ship; let us sit at the feet of Jesus, listen to his instructions, bind his gospel to our hearts, and make it the man of our counsel. Would we, in fine, be humble, meek, patient, and temperate, be crucified to the world, and have the appetites of sense subjected to the dictates of reason; let us make this divine science our chief study, and glory in nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. *The life I live in the flesh*, says the apostle *a*, *I live by the faith of the Son of God.* And if Christians should thus live, ministers should no doubt thus preach as well as live. Would they convert sinners to God, spread the savour of genuine piety, and promote the interests of substantial morality; the gospel must be their daily study, their continual theme of discourse.

4. And *lastly*. How vain a thing is mere speculation in religion!

The great end of preaching the gospel is to make men holy and good; nor has God afforded us any discovery of his will, but is adapted some way or other to this end. We are to judge therefore of the importance of a doctrine by its practical tendency. To this standard every truth is to be brought, and by it our zeal is to be regulated. If this idea were duly attended to, we should escape the extremes of bigotry and neutrality: we should neither be indifferent to the faith, nor value ourselves on our profound speculations.

Ah! my brethren, to what purpose is it that we are skilled in controversy, can decide on nice questions, and draw the line to a hair between points on which the best of men have differed, if we are without that unction from the Holy One which diffuses a divine savour through the soul, and adds a grateful perfume to our words and actions? *Though I have all knowledge, if I have not charity, I am nothing b.* Let us therefore be persuaded, having received the word of the kingdom, to be anxious above all things to maintain a character and conduct agreeable to our holy profession. *Herein is my Father glorified*, says our divine Saviour, *that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples c.*

a Gal. ii. 20. *b* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *c* John xv. 8.

PART II.

It is the character of the real Christian we are now considering, as drawn by our Saviour in the parable of the sower.—*Some seeds fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold a.* Now by *the good ground*, our Lord tells us, he means *those who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience b.* Having briefly explained these words, we have proposed to shew the necessity of men's hearts being made honest and good, in order to their profiting by the word they hear—to describe the kind of fruit which persons of this character bear—to consider the variety there is in regard of degrees of fruitfulness, and the reasons of it—and to represent the blessedness of such persons, which, though not expressed, is yet implied in the general purport of the parable. We have discoursed on the two first heads, and proceed now,

III. To consider the great variety there is among Christians in regard of degrees of fruitfulness, and the reasons of it.

Seed sown on good ground brings forth fruit—some an hundred, some sixty, and some thirty-fold. Very astonishing instances of fertility we meet with in natural history *c*. But though such instances occur not in the ordinary course of things, it is yet certain that in all ages, and in all countries, the produce of the earth is various. And this variety is commonly imputed to difference of soil, or difference in the mode of cultivation, or difference of climates and seasons. In like manner it is a fact, that the fruits which Christians bring forth, though in the general of the same good quality, are very different in quantity: some abound more in good works than others. And if the reasons of this are inquired into, we shall find them somewhat si-

a Matt. xiii. 8. *b* Luke viii. 15.

c Of the extraordinary fruitfulness of corn in Africa, Pliny gives the following account.—"Tritico nihil est fertilius: hoc ei natura, tribuit, quoniam eo maxime alat hominem: utpote cum e modio, si sit aptum solum, quale in Byzacio Africæ campo, centeni quinquageni modii reddantur. Misit ex eo loco Divo Augusto procurator ejus ex uno grano (vix credibile dictu) quadringenta paucis minus germina, extantque de ea re epistolæ. Misit et Neroni similiter CCCXI stipulas ex uno grano."—Plin. Lib. XVIII. cap. 10.

milar to those just mentioned respecting the produce of the earth. Let us first establish the fact, and then examine the reasons of it.

First,—As to the fact that there are degrees of fruitfulness, a little observation will sufficiently prove it.

Fruitfulness may be considered in regard both of the devout affections of the heart, and the external actions of the life; in each of which views it will admit of degrees. As to the former, that is, piety, it is certain it may be in a more flourishing state in one man than in another. But comparisons here are dangerous, if indeed they may be allowed of at all. Religion is a personal thing; a matter that lies between God and a man's own soul. And as we should not dare to pronounce definitely upon any one's state towards God, so we should be careful how we give the preference to one religious character before another. In these matters we may be, and often are very much mistaken. And I have no doubt but that at the great day many will be first, who in the opinion of their fellow-mortals were last; and many will be last, who were first. And, however we may be at liberty to judge more freely of actions, yet to infer certainly from them to the state of men's hearts, is going beyond our line, since the comparative difference between the good works of one Christian and another, may be owing to causes very distinct from that of the inward temper of the mind, as we shall have occasion hereafter to shew. All this I say, to check that forward and wanton speculation which too much prevails among professing Christians, and is a disgrace to religion. *Judge not*, says our Saviour, *lest ye be judged a.* When we see any rich in good works, we are justified in pronouncing that religion is in a prosperous state in their hearts. And where we see any less fruitful, charity should teach us to impute the difference to any other possible cause, rather than that of a declension in vital godliness.

But to return. It is with good works themselves that we are here concerned. And it will be readily admitted that some abound more in the fruits of holiness than others. So it is in our time, and so it has been in every age of the world. The variety is prodigious. What multitudes are there among those

a Matt. vii. 1.

who call themselves Christians, of whom we can collect little more from our observation of them than that they live harmless, sober, and regular lives. Their obedience is rather negative than positive. They bring no dishonour on their profession, nor yet are they very ornamental and exemplary. Others are strictly conscientious and circumspect in their walk, far removed from all appearance of gaiety and dissipation, and remarkably serious and constant in their attendance upon religious duties: but, for want of sweetness of temper, or of that sprightliness and freedom which a lively faith inspires, the fruit they bear is but slender, and of an unpleasant flavour. There are those, further, in whom seriousness and cheerfulness are happily united, and whose conduct is amiable in the view of all around them: but then, moving in a narrow sphere, and possessing no great zeal or resolution, their lives are distinguished by few remarkable exertions for the glory of God and the good of others. And again, there are a number whose bosoms glowing with flaming zeal and ardent love, are rich in good works, never weary in well-doing, and full of the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of God.

Some we see, in the early part of their profession mounting up with wings as eagles: by and by, their ardour somewhat abating, they run in the ways of God: and after a while, yet further declining in their vigour, they can only walk in the path to heaven; they however do not turn back. Others, on the contrary, we see contending with the weakness and frowardness of childhood, then collecting the strength and vivacity of youth, so proceeding to the steadiness and judgment of riper years, and at length closing their days amidst all the rich fruits of wisdom and experience. In the garden of God there are trees of different growth. Some newly planted, of slender stature and feeble make, which yet bring forth good, though but little fruit. And here and there you see one that out-tops all the rest, whose roots spread far and wide, and whose boughs are laden in autumn with rich and large fruit. Such variety is there among Christians. And variety there is too in the different species of good works. Some are eminent in this virtue, and some in that: while perhaps a few abound in every good word and work.

Whoever consults the history of religion in the Bible, will

see all that has been said exemplified in the characters and lives of a long scroll of pious men. Not to speak here of the particular excellencies that distinguished these men of God from each other, it is enough to observe that some vastly outshone others. The proportions of a hundred, sixty, and thirty fold, might be applied to patriarchs, prophets, judges, kings, apostles, and the Christians of the primitive church. Between, for instance, an Abraham that offered up his only son, and a righteous Lot that lingered at the call of an angel. A Moses that led the Israelites through all the perils of the Red Sea and the wilderness, to the borders of Canaan, and a pious Aaron who yet on an occasion temporized with that perverse people. A Joshua who trampled on the necks of idolatrous princes, and a Sampson who betrayed his weakness amidst astonishing efforts of miraculous strength. A David who was the man after God's own heart; and an Abijah in whom was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. A Daniel who was greatly beloved of God; and a Jonah who, though he feared God, thought he did well to be angry. In a word, between the great apostle of the Gentiles, that flaming seraph in the Christian hemisphere; and a timid unbelieving Thomas.—But let us now,

Secondly,—Inquire into the grounds and reasons of this disparity among Christians, respecting the fruits of holiness. These are of very different consideration. Many of them will be found to have no connexion at all with the inward temper of the mind; a reflection, therefore, upon them, will give energy to what has been said, in regard of the charity we ought to exercise in judging of others. Let us begin then,

1. With men's *worldly circumstances.*

Much wealth rarely falls to the lot of good people; it does however in some instances. Admitting then that the rich and the poor Christian possess an equal share of the grace of God, this difference in regard of their temporal affairs will create a difference in the number, variety, and splendour of their good works. The affluent Christian you will see pouring his bounty on all around him, hospitably throwing open his doors to the stranger, wiping away the falling tear of the widow, providing for the relief of her fatherless children, propping up a house sinking into poverty, contributing generously to charitable in-

stitutions, distributing useful books among his poor neighbours, assisting ministers in their labours, and forwarding in various ways the general cause of truth, liberty, and religion. These are good works which cannot fail, when known, of exciting admiration. When known, I say, because the modest piety of him who does them will labour to cast a veil over them, and induce him humbly to acknowledge when he has done all, that he is, in regard of God, an unprofitable servant.

But the poor Christian can render few if any of these services to his fellow-creatures. The utmost he can perhaps do is, by his daily labour to feed and clothe his family, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men. His works are of a different kind, the works of industry, contentment, submission, and patience. He moves in a narrow sphere, beyond which, however, he often looks with a compassionate and benevolent eye, obliged to substitute the will instead of the deed.

2. *Opportunity* is another ground of distinction among Christians in regard of fruitfulness.

By opportunity, I mean occasions of usefulness which arise under the particular and immediate direction of divine Providence. A man shall sometimes be so situated, and such unexpected events take place, as that, by a seasonable exertion of his abilities, he shall be capable of doing great service to the cause of virtue and religion. The stations assigned by Providence to some Christians are particularly favourable to the idea of glorifying God and promoting the good of society. Moving in elevated spheres they have numerous and powerful connections, and of consequence great weight and influence. A Daniel shall have such easy access to the presence of a mighty tyrant, as shall enable him to whisper the most beneficial counsels in his ear; and an apostle, by being brought in chains before a no less powerful prince, shall have an opportunity of defending the cause of his divine Master in the most essential manner. Christians, if such there be, that are admitted at any time into the courts of sovereigns, into the circles of the great, or into the counsels of the wise, may do eminent service to religion by their reasonings, admonitions, and examples. Nor is there any station of life wherein a good man is not now and then called, by some extraordinary circumstance in providence,

to special offices of piety and charity; such as instructing the ignorant, reproving the profane, guiding the doubtful, reclaiming the vicious, edifying the weak, and comforting the distressed. But these opportunities of usefulness occur more frequently in some situations than others, and of consequence the fruitfulness of some Christians is greater than that of others.

3. *Mental abilities* have a considerable influence in this matter. What shining talents do some good men possess! They have extensive learning, great knowledge of mankind, much sagacity and penetration, singular fortitude, a happy manner of address, flowing language, and a remarkable sweetness of temper. These and other amiable qualities of a natural kind, uniting with a deep sense of religion, and a warm zeal for the glory of God, give them the advantage in point of general usefulness in society above most around them. They can detect error and defend the truth, frown upon vice, and allure men to virtue, assert the cause of religion and repel the calumnies of infidels, after a manner not to be attempted by others, who yet possess the same piety and zeal with themselves. Their singular talents open a large field of usefulness to them, draw the attention of the public, give them a commanding authority over popular prejudices, and, with the blessing of God, secure to them no small success in the arduous business of reforming mankind.

The apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, endowed with the gifts of knowledge and utterance, went abroad into all the earth, and brought forth fruit an hundred-fold: while private Christians whom they exhorted to covet earnestly better gifts than these, could do litle more, destitute of popular talents, than recommend the holy religion they professed by their unblameable lives. And since their time, there have been men possessed of extraordinary gifts who have laboured with uncommon success in the vineyard: while their brethren of inferior abilities, but equal piety, have complained, in the language of the prophet, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed a?* To some the great Householder gives ten talents, and to others five: nor does he expect the like returns from the latter as from the former. He is not a hard master, whatever the slothful servant might pretend, *reaping*

a Isa. liii. 1.

where he has not sowed, and gathering where he has not strawed a.

4. The *different means of religion* that good men enjoy, are another occasion of their different degrees of fruitfulness.

If the gospel is adapted, as we have shewn it is, to promote holiness and animate men to generous and noble actions, it follows that the more clearly it is dispensed, the greater abundance of these good effects of it is to be expected. Upon this principle, Christians have the advantage of those who flourished under the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, the present being far preferable in point of light and glory to the former. But it is the difference among Christians themselves we have here chiefly in view. And the difference is considerable, for though the gospel is every where one and the same thing, yet the manner in which it is administered is various. Some seasons and climates, and some modes of cultivation, are more favourable to the fruits of the earth than others. So it is here. God bestows different gifts on different ministers; it seems natural, therefore, to expect in the ordinary course of things, that they who sit under a singularly edifying and animating ministry, should be more exemplary and ornamental in their lives than others. They have the truths of religion set in a more clear and convincing light, and the motives to obedience urged on them in a more lively and forcible manner than some others; and therefore ought to excel in the fruits of holiness.

The like also may be observed of peculiarly striking events of Providence, which happen to some Christians. These with the blessing of God become the happy means of their growth in grace. What a rapid progress do they make in the divine life, amidst these extraordinary cultivations! How do they abound in love and good works! While their fellow-Christians who go on in a smooth path, seldom or never tried in the furnace of affliction, or emptied from vessel to vessel, give few distinguishing proofs of flaming zeal for the glory of God, and disinterested benevolence towards mankind. Hence our Lord says, speaking of himself as the vine, and of his Father as the husbandman, *Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit b:* plainly intimating that as

a Matt. xxv. 16. b John xv. 2.

there are degrees of fruitfulness among Christians, so the increase, remarkable in some instances, is owing to the extraordinary measures divine Providence is pleased to take with them.—From hence we are led to observe,

5. That *the comparative different state of religion* in one Christian and another, is the more immediate and direct cause of their different fruitfulness.

It is not our province, as I said before, to enter into men's hearts, to examine what passes there, and comparing their supposed inward tempers and feelings, to pronounce upon their respective characters. But this plain general truth we may affirm, leaving every one to apply it to himself, that in proportion as religion is on the advance or decline in a man's heart, so will his external conduct be more or less exemplary. If faith, love, and joy are in lively exercise, there will be correspondent expressions of these tempers in his life. Deeply impressed with the reality of future and eternal things, warmed at his very heart with the love of God in Christ, and sweetly refreshed with a sense of the divine favour, he will be strictly conscientious in all his intercourses with others, temperate in the use of worldly enjoyments, patient under his afflictions, ready to distribute to the wants of others, and vigorous in his endeavours to advance the glory of God, and promote the best interests of mankind.

But if these divine principles are in a weak, sickly, declining state, the torpor that has seized on his mind, will affect his external conduct; he will be listless, slothful, and neutral, and though he does not absolutely cease to bring forth fruit, yet the fruit he does bear will be inconsiderable in quantity, and of no very pleasing flavour. This matter is so clear that I need take no further pains either to explain or prove it. But while we apply this reasoning with all wholesome severity to ourselves, I must again caution you against the great evil of too hastily judging of others from external appearances. The good works of some Christians are concealed by an impenetrable veil from our view. But supposing they really are few, yet if their fewness may be imputed to either of the causes before-mentioned, let us not be fond of setting it down to this cause, the most unfavourable of all, namely, an essential defect in the spirit and

power of religion.—To what has been said I have only to add one other reason of this variety among Christians; and that is,

6. And *lastly,—The greater or less effusion of divine influences.*

In regard of husbandry, how much the largeness of the crop depends upon the favourableness of the season, we have had occasion to shew: indeed without the aid of the sun and dew, and the blessing of God, though the ground were ever so well manured and sown, there would be no crop at all. The Lord blessed Isaac; and so having sowed in the land of the Philistines, he received in the same year an hundred-fold *a*. In like manner, clear as it is that every Christian ought to bring forth fruit, it is also evident that his endeavours will be vain without the divine assistance and blessing. But where more than ordinary fruits are brought forth, as in the instances of some eminent men that might be mentioned; it would be strange if we did not acknowledge, that a more than ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit is poured upon such persons. The noble exploits of an illustrious army of confessors and martyrs, who have contended with principalities and powers, and gained a complete victory over them, are only to be accounted for on this principle. And if their good works are more numerous and brilliant than those of the common class of Christians; if they have brought forth fruit a hundred-fold, and these only sixty; the former gratefully ascribe their superiority to the grace of God, while both the one and the other humbly acknowledge they have not improved their talents to the degree that might be expected.

Thus have we stated the fact respecting the different degrees of fruitfulness remarkable among Christians, and considered the true grounds and reasons of it.—It now remains that we represent,

IV. The blessedness of those who, hearing the word, and keeping it in honest and good hearts, bring forth the fruits of holiness. This, as we have observed, is implied, though not expressed, in the parable. And if we consider the pleasure that accompanies ingenuous obedience—the evidence which thence arises to the uprightness of the heart—the respect in which a man of this character is held among his fellow-Christians—and

a Gen. xxvi. 12.

the rewards he shall hereafter receive at the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall readily pronounce him a happy man.

1. As to the pleasure that accompanies ingenuous obedience. *Great peace have they*, says David, *who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them a.* And Solomon assures us, that *the ways of wisdom*, that is, of holiness, *are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace b.* Much might be said here of the pleasures of inward religion, the comforts which arise from communion with God, a sense of his favour, and the hope of eternal life. But I have my eye at present not so much on the contemplative and devotional, as the practical part of religion. And can any one doubt that a regular attention to duty upon right principles is accompanied with pleasure? Multitudes indeed shrink back from it. They account time spent in the worship of God long and tedious; acts of compassion and benevolence, if not of justice, a severe tax upon pleasure and property; and all restraints laid upon their exorbitant passions and appetites, a most intolerable burden. But if they had a taste for communion with the greatest and best of Beings, if they had hearts susceptible of human and generous feelings, and if they knew the value of temperance and moderation; how would they love the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelleth! how would they rejoice in doing good to the souls and bodies of their fellow-creatures! and with what satisfaction and cheerfulness would they daily partake of the bounties of Providence!

Such is the character of the real Christian: how happy a man therefore must he be! I mean when he acts in character: for it must not be denied, that his heart is sometimes out of tune for devotional exercises, that he is not always alike disposed to benevolent exertions, and that his appetites and passions too often rebel against his prevailing inclinations, though they gain not the absolute mastery over them. And hence all that pain he feels at his heart, and all that sadness which appears on his countenance. It is not his bringing forth fruit that makes him unhappy, but his bringing forth no more fruit, and, in his own modest apprehension, scarce any at all. Holiness and happiness are intimately connected: were that perfect and unmixed, this

a Psal. cxix. 165. b Prov. iii. 17.

would be so too. But though the best obedience the Christian can render hath no merit in it, and he would reprobate the most distant idea of pleading it at the tribunal of justice, yet surely it hath its pleasures. Make trial of it, Christian.—You have made trial. Tell me then, you who rank among the most unfruitful of Christ's real disciples, whether you have not tasted a sweetness in holy duties, a satisfaction in acts of brotherly-kindness, and a pleasure in the moderate use of worldly enjoyments, that infinitely exceeds all the boasted joys of profane and wicked men? Would you then be happy, go and bring forth fruit; do all the good you can, and give God the glory.

2. Fruitfulness affords a noble proof of a man's uprightness, and so tends indirectly as well as directly to promote his happiness.

With what anxiety does the sincere but timorous Christian often put the following questions to himself:—"Am I renewed by the grace of God? Have I ingenuously repented of my sins? Do I truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there a spark of real love in my breast to the divine Saviour? And may I venture to reckon myself among the number of his disciples?" Important questions! Our comfort is much concerned in obtaining satisfactory answers to them. But how do we expect to have them answered? There is such a thing as *God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God* a. But the asking in a right manner the testimony of God's Spirit, implies the paying a due regard to the testimony of our own spirit. And by what evidence are we to judge of the truth or falsity of this testimony, but that which is laid down in the word of God? And what is that?—It is our bearing fruit. *Herein is my Father glorified*, says Christ, *that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples*, or so shall ye give proof that ye are my disciples b. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*; that is, if we aim to keep his commandments c. Again, *Every one that doth righteousness is born of God* d.

And now, if, from a regard to the authority of God, and a sense of our infinite obligations to his grace, we make it our aim to bring forth the fruits of holiness; though these fruits may

a Rom. viii. 16. b John xv. 8. c 1 John ii. 3. d 1 John ii. 29.

not be a hundred, or sixty, but only thirty-fold; though through a combination of circumstances they may be very inconsiderable indeed; yet we possess an authentic testimony that we are the genuine disciples of Christ. And the knowledge of this tends directly to promote our peace and happiness. But what a further accession of strength does this evidence receive, from that abundance of fruitfulness which distinguishes some characters from others! An apostle who brought forth an hundred-fold, conscious that he acted from the purest motives, and receiving the immediate testimony of God's Spirit; could not fail of having every doubt respecting his state removed, and so enjoying a full assurance of faith. And how unspeakable must his happiness have been! Who that fears God does not envy him of the sweet peace, the abiding satisfaction, and triumphant joy he possessed?

Should not this then serve as one motive, among many others, to animate us to love obedience? And if we are so happy as to arrive at an assurance of hope, that fruitfulness which may have contributed to clear up our evidence of interest in the favour of God, will not soothe our vanity, but be humbly and thankfully acknowledged to have originated from the seasonable influence and assistance of divine grace. View the Christian then walking in the light of God's countenance, and having the joyful testimony of his own conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he has his conversation in the world; and say, whether he is not of all men the most happy?

3. The esteem, too, in which he is held among his fellow-Christians, must contribute not a little to his comfort.

To be honoured and loved by wise and good men is a great blessing. This blessing we may covet, and if we bring forth fruit we shall enjoy it. The world indeed, reproved by our good deeds, will hate us; slothful professors, not caring to imitate us, will disgustfully turn away their attention from us; but in the eye of those who truly fear God, we shall be the excellent of the earth. They will be fond of associating with us, and feel an attachment of heart to us like that of David to Jonathan.

Whatever in the creation is beautiful and useful, and best answers the ends of its existence, will be admired by a sensible

observer. When I go through a field covered with a golden crop, or walk in a garden laden with rich fruits, the sight pleases my eye: I praise the hand that cultivated the one, and dressed the other, and give glory to the God of nature who crowned their labours with his blessing. In like manner, when I see a Christian acting under the influence of his principles, bridling his passions, cherishing every noble and generous sentiment, copying after the example of his divine Master, going about doing good, and giving the most undisguised proofs of meekness, benevolence, and piety; O how pleasing is the sight! I stand and gaze upon him, I feel I love him, I wish to have him for my most intimate friend, I pray God to bless him, and I rejoice in the hope of spending an eternal sabbath in his company.

Good nature, learning, wit, and other shining talents have their attractions; but a man of the character I am describing, though of inferior mental abilities, is far more amiable in the eye of him whose senses are exercised to discern good and evil; than the most exalted genius that is destitute of the fear of God. There is no comparison between them. Angels hail the former, but despise the latter. These are held in detestation by God the Judge of all—those are greatly beloved by him; for their bosoms are the temples of the Holy Ghost.—Once more,

4. How glorious will be the rewards which the fruitful Christian will receive, at the hands of the great Husbandman, on the day of harvest!

That day is approaching. *Mark the perfect man, behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace a.* Going down to death like a shock of corn fully ripe, the precious grain shall lie secure in the bosom of the earth; angels shall keep their vigils about it; while the immortal spirit, acquiring its highest degree of perfection, shall join the company of the blessed above. These will hail the stranger, with loud acclamations of joy, to the mansions prepared for its residence in heaven; and these too, unused to censure and detraction, will applaud his works that follow him thither with heartfelt approbation and delight. Yea, the blessed Jesus himself, whose word was the seed whence all this fruit sprung, and whose Spirit gave life and energy to it; will say, *Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou*

Psal. xxxvii. 37.

into the joy of thy Lord a. Nor is this all: At the day of the resurrection, the body, whose members had been *instruments of righteousness unto God b,* shall *be changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself c.* And thus, united to a pure and spiritual body, the Christian, amidst an infinite multitude of others who had heard the word, and kept it, and brought forth the fruits of it, shall be acknowledged, approved, and applauded by the sentence of Christ his righteous Judge, pronounced in the presence of the whole world. So shall he and they be caught up with the ascending Saviour to the abodes of bliss above, and there be for ever with the Lord.

And now, all these things laid together, how great is the blessedness of the fruitful Christian! What remains then, but that we take fire at these considerations, and resolve, in a humble dependance on divine grace, that we will endeavour to outdo each other in love and good works! Has our divine Master redeemed us with his precious blood, obtained the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify us, blessed us with the means of grace, set before us his own perfect example, and given us such exceeding great and precious promises? And shall we content ourselves, after all this expense he has been at for our good, with making him the return of a few cold heartless services, for the promoting his honour and interest in the world? No, Christian. Such conduct would be most ungrateful and disingenuous. Let me beseech you then, my beloved brethren, *to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord d.* And as the word of the kingdom is the seed whence fruitfulness is to be expected, let us receive it with meekness, remembering that *it is able to save our souls e.* And let our Saviour's own exhortation, with the explanation and improvement of which we shall close these discourses, have its due weight with us all,—*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

a Matt. xxv. 21. *b* Rom. vi. 13. *c* Phil. iii. 21.
d 1 Cor. xv. 58. *e* James i. 21.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE DUTY OF CONSIDERATION EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

MATT. XIII. 9.—*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

IN such manner does our Saviour close the *Parable of the Sower*, exhorting his hearers with great earnestness and affection *a*, to weigh well and consider what he had said. The same phrase occurs in other parts of Scripture *b*; and was well adapted, as here used by our Lord, to convey the following ideas to the minds of the people—that the discourse he had been delivering was parabolical—that the truth veiled under the parable was most important—that their seriously considering it was absolutely necessary to their profiting by it—and that they were not to complain it was unintelligible, for that, if they were not benefited by his instructions, the fault would be in the perverseness of their wills, rather than in any defect in their natural or mental powers. Let us briefly elucidate these remarks, before we proceed to the main point in view, which is the explaining and enforcing the great duty of considering the word preached.

1. Our Lord evidently meant, by the language of the text, to remind his hearers, that it was an apologue, fable, or parable he had been delivering.

This mode of instruction obtained much in ancient times and eastern countries, as we have had occasion to observe before; and it was usual too, either at the beginning or close of the discourse, to intimate as much to the audience. So that our Saviour's audience would have been inexcusable, had they gone away pretending, that all he had been doing was to give them a lecture in husbandry, or to amuse them with an idle tale of sowing and reaping, matters they well enough understood be-

a ταυτα λεγων εφωνει—so Luke introduces the text, chap. viii. 8.—which words Dr. Doddridge thus paraphrases, "When he had said these things, he cried out *with a louder voice than before*," &c.

b Matt. xi. 15. xiii. 43.—Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29. iii. 6, 13, 22. xiii. 9.

fore. Indeed, from our Lord's general character and manner of preaching, they might naturally enough presume something more than this was intended; but his saying thus at the close, *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear;* or in other words, Remember all this is a parable, was putting the matter beyond a doubt.

2. By this mode of expression they were further reminded, that the several truths veiled under this parable were most interesting and important.

It is as much as if he had said, "Think not I have been trifling with you. No. The instruction just given you is of the last consequence to your present and future welfare. I am a divine teacher. I come to inform your understandings, and do good to your hearts. And be assured, if it is of importance to the preservation of animal life, that your grounds are cultivated, and bring forth fruit at the proper season; it is of infinitely greater importance that your souls are renewed by the grace of God, and that ye are rich in good works."

3. The direct purport of the exhortation was, to persuade them to consider what they had heard.

"Think not," as if he had said, "it is enough that ye have heard my words. There is a further duty lying upon you. Recollect my sayings. Meditate upon them. Consider the truths couched under them. Lay them up in your memories and hearts. Endeavour to get the better of your prejudices. Pray to God to open your understandings, and change your hearts. And reduce what has been said to practice." Thus does our Lord teach his hearers the absolute necessity of seriously considering the word, in order to their profiting by it.—Once more,

4. He in effect tells them, that if they were not benefited by what they heard, the fault was rather in their will than their understanding. *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Here is a clear distinction observed between the natural and moral powers of the soul, that is, the understanding and judgment on the one part, and the will and affections on the other. As to the former, enervated and broken as our reasoning powers are, men in general cannot pretend that they are absolutely incompetent to consideration. If indeed they were wholly des-

titute of a capacity of perceiving, comparing, and reflecting, it were as great a folly to reason with them, as it would be to utter articulate sounds in the ear of him who is irrecoverably deaf. How absurd to say to him that has lost the organ of hearing, hear! And how absurd to say to him that is absolutely insane, understand! But this is not the case. Men can affix ideas to what we say. They can lay them together, and infer from them. They can think of the facts and doctrines of religion. They can consider of their evidence and importance. And they can examine themselves upon the question, how they stand affected towards them. Yea, more than this, they for the most part presume that their faculties are clearer and stronger than they really are. So that to exhort those who thus *have ears to hear* to hear, is by no means irrational. And it is upon this ground the many expostulations and admonitions of the Bible, addressed to men in their sins, stand.

But then it is as evident, on the other hand, that the will and affections are miserably depraved. Men are stubbornly averse to receive the truth in the love of it. But will any say there is no fault in this? If they will, they deny that there is any turpitude or guilt in human actions, and of consequence, that man is an accountable creature. It is therefore fit men should be reasoned and expostulated with, because this, agreeably to the original construction of their nature, is the proper mode of moving and inclining their will. And as it is the method God has appointed, such reasonings and expostulations we may hope will be accompanied with a divine energy, and so become happily effectual.

The text thus explained, we proceed to the grand point we have in view in this discourse; which is,

I. To represent to you the duty which men owe to the word they hear; and,

II. To enforce it with suitable motives.

I. Let us consider the duty our Saviour inculcates on those to whom the word is preached.

Here, in order to do justice to our subject, it will be necessary, previous to our entering upon it, to say a few things respecting the duty of those who preach. Ministers ought themselves surely to consider what they say, if they expect the peo-

ple to consider it. What right has any man to obtrude the wild indigested reveries of his own wandering imagination upon others, and to insist upon their hearing him with attention and patience? There is no law either of God or man to authorize the levying so heavy a tax upon any audience. Certainly if we would have others hear us, we should say something worth their hearing. To this end,

1. Let us take care to digest properly in our own minds the subjects on which we mean to discourse to others.

The apostle's advice to Timothy is directly in point to what I am here recommending:—*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* a. How can we make that plain to others of which we have no clear idea ourselves? And how can we get clear ideas upon any subject, without duly considering it? If this be a dictate of common sense, as it certainly is, with what decency can he who pours out his extemporaneous effusions upon the people, say at the close of his unmeaning harangue, *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear?* This is little better than adding insult to folly.

Indeed our Saviour directs his apostles, when they should be brought before rulers and kings for his sake, *to take no thought before hand what they should speak, nor to pre-meditate, for it should be given them in that hour what they should speak* b. But who does not see that this was an extraordinary case, and that therefore for any man to suppose he is justified by this passage in the neglect of pre-meditation, is not only to reason falsely, but in direct defiance of the apostle's admonition to Timothy just mentioned, and many others of the like nature? Let us then, my brethren, whose duty it is to instruct others, endeavour to get all the knowledge we can, and be conscientiously laborious in our preparations for the service of the sanctuary. This is the voice of common sense, of Scripture, and of all considerate people who wish to be benefited by our instructions.

2. Care also is to be taken about the manner, as well as the matter of our discourse.

It is beneath the dignity of his character who brings a message from heaven, and treats with men on subjects of the high-

a 2 Tim. ii. 15. b Mark xiii. 12.

est concernment, to use the enticing words of man's wisdom, or to affect the pompous language of vain rhetoricians. But, while he is careful to avoid a style that is bombast and tumid, and indeed every thing that looks like affectation, he should be cautious how he degenerates into the opposite extreme. Rude and barbarous language, ill-managed metaphors, trite stories, quaint conceits, and a long train of other trifling puerilities, too common among some in our time, not only render the man contemptible who uses them, but have a very pernicious effect upon the generality of hearers. Their judgment is perverted, instead of being informed; their ears are tickled, instead of their hearts being made better; and, to say the best, if they are not disgusted, they are yet only amused. An easy, plain, natural style, alike remote from pedantry and barbarism, best becomes the authority and importance of divine truth: *sound speech that cannot be condemned a.*

Nor is it to edification, for the sake of pleasing a few politer hearers, to throw our discourses into a declamatory essaying form, and affectedly disguise the method we lay down to ourselves. We should ever remember we are speaking to the plainest capacities; and as the arranging our ideas properly is necessary to our being understood, so the giving each division of our discourse its denomination of number, has a happy effect to assist the attention and memory of our hearers.

And then as to voice and action, having taken pains with ourselves to correct what is manifestly improper and disgusting, it may be safely left to nature, and the kind of impulse excited by the subject on which we are treating, to guide us spontaneously in these matters. Clearly understanding what we say, and deeply feeling its truth and importance, our manner will be, not trifling, dull, and formal, but grave, sensible, and enlivening.—Which leads me to observe,

3. That we should look well to our aims and views in discoursing of the great things of God.

The end we propose in any matter, will have a considerable influence on the means we use to attain it. The more interesting our object is, the more assiduous will be our endeavours to compass it. Now the glory of God, and the salvation of im-

a Tit. ii. 8.

mortal souls, are the most noble and important ends we can possibly have in view. The more therefore our minds are occupied with these ideas, and the more deeply our hearts are affected with them, the greater pains we shall take to be masters of the subjects we treat of, and to discuss them in such manner as shall be to the edification of those who hear us. Wherefore the preserving a lively sense of religion on our hearts, has a direct tendency to promote both our acceptableness, and our usefulness. Animated by a pure zeal for the honour of Christ, and the success of his gospel, we shall study diligently and preach fervently.—To which I have only to add,

4. That our dependance should be firmly placed on the gracious and seasonable influences of the Holy Spirit.

A growing experience of the vital power of religion, and an increasing sense of the difficulty and importance of our work, will not fail to convince us of the need we stand in of superior assistance. That assistance therefore, both in our studies and public ministrations, we should earnestly implore, encouraged by the many gracious promises of God's word to that end. Nor should our views terminate here, but extend to the salutary effect of our instructions upon the hearts of men, which is not to be expected without a divine blessing; for were a Paul to plant, or an Apollos to water, it would be all in vain, if God gave not the increase.

And now, thus prepared, we have a right, be our audience who they may, to adopt the language of our Master, and with authority to say, *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Upon the grounds of common sense as well as religion, we may demand their most serious attention. And I have the rather chosen to be thus particular on the duty of ministers, as it gives me the better title to that freedom and earnestness which I mean to use in explaining and enforcing the duty of consideration, to which we now proceed.—And here the first thing we have to recommend is,

First,—Some kind of preparation previous to our hearing the word.

If we mean to attend to an argument upon any subject, we should compose ourselves to the business; especially if the subject is important, and the discussion of it likely to take up

time. Justice can be done to no argument, if we come not to the consideration of it with minds divested of prejudice and passion, and in a calm self-collected state. This therefore we may reasonably demand of all who attend upon the public preaching of the gospel, even those who may as yet have their doubts of its divine authority. For the question respecting its truth, is, and must be acknowledged by them, as well as others, to be important. But the sort of persons I have here chiefly in my eye, are not occasional hearers, or those who now and then out of mere curiosity drop into places of public worship, but those who statedly attend the ministry of the word. To you we say, and especially in regard of the day devoted to divine service,—*Keep your feet when ye go to the house of God, and be ready* [a], be disposed to hear, in a temper of mind suited to the service in which you are to engage.

On the morning of that day, in your retirement, consider seriously with yourself what you are about. Say to yourself—the soliloquy is natural, and in all probability will be useful—"I am going to a place where God is worshipped, and where what is said to be his word is discoursed of. What is the end I propose to myself in going thither? Is it merely to conform to custom, and to oblige my friends and neighbours? Or am I disposed to listen to what the preacher may say, and to give it that consideration, which its importance as a message from God (for that is its claim) demands? Both decency and good sense teach, that my going to a place of public instruction obliges me to pay all due attention to the speaker. The matter to be discoursed of carries importance upon the very face of it. It respects my well-being in this world and in that to come. I therefore do myself injustice if I enter not coolly into the argument, and so consider it as to be able to determine whether the doctrine be true or false, to be received or rejected. Should the latter upon good grounds appear to be the case, I shall be justified in absenting myself for the future from a place where error and falsehood is propagated, and so bearing my testimony against it. I shall have done my duty, and have the satisfaction of acting agreeable to it. Such conduct will be manly, and approve itself to God and my own conscience. But, on

[a] Eccl. v. 1.

the contrary, If I go thither out of custom, or purely to gratify my curiosity, and pay no other attention to the business than I would to any idle tale told me in common discourse, I violate the laws of decency and good manners: and if what I hear should after all turn out to be true, my reaping no advantage from it will be my own fault, and my condemnation another day the more tremendous. I will therefore seriously consider what I am about. I will endeavour to thrust from my mind all impertinent thoughts, and all anxieties about worldly affairs. I will impose silence upon my passions, lay my prejudices under an interdict, and go to what is called the house of God with all the coolness and composure I can command."

Were you thus to reason with yourself, previous to your entrance on the public duties of the day, and then on your knees humbly and fervently implore the blessing of God on what you are about, you would be likely to receive advantage from the word preached. Resolve therefore to act after this manner *a*. What I have urged is a dictate of common sense, and whether religion be or be not true, you have no other alternative left you than either to abandon public worship entirely, or to address yourself to it with the seriousness and self-collection that have been recommended.—The next thing to be considered is,

SECONDLY,—How we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God.

At the time agreed on for the public worship, all who mean to join in it should be present. *Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer b.* And Cornelius, when Peter entered his house to preach the word to him and his family, thus salutes him, *Now are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God c.* The coming in after the service is begun is very indecent. It is disturbing both to him who leads the worship, and to those who are engaged in it. But this is not all, it has an ill influence on what follows. Prayer and praise, with which pub-

a Here give me leave to recommend "Short Meditations on Select Portions of Scripture, chiefly designed to be read on the morning of this day; by the Rev. Mr. Turner, of Abingdon. To which are added, Considerations on the Custom of Visiting on Sunday."

b Acts iii. 1. *c* Acts x. 33.

lic worship is usually introduced, are themselves important branches of duty; but their utility in connexion with preaching is also very considerable. The mind by a serious and devout attention to these duties, is put into a suitable frame and temper for hearing the word. Having sung the praises of God with elevation of heart, and fervently asked his assistance in attending to what may be spoken, we shall be likely to give the more earnest heed to the things that we hear. He therefore who indecently comes in at a late hour, deprives himself of this natural and proper mean of preparation for what is to follow. Let us then come early to the house of God *a*.

And need we be told in what manner we should behave ourselves there? Can it be right to compose ourselves quietly to sleep? or to be incessantly gazing about on the congregation? or to be wholly employed in observing the person, and watching the attitude and manner of the speaker? or to suffer our thoughts to wander, like the fool's eye, to the ends of the earth? He who treats public instruction after this manner, violates the laws of decency and common sense, and defeats all the useful purposes which he would be supposed to have in view by making one of the audience. His presence says he came thither to hear: his behaviour the contrary. How absurd! My coming to the assembly is a tacit avowal of my intention to listen to the discourse; that and that only ought to occupy my mind. On the tongue of the preacher my ear should hang; his view I should endeavour to comprehend; his reasonings I should diligently attend to; and the thread of his discourse I should closely follow. If prejudice arises, it should be opposed. If passion disturbs, it should be suppressed. In short, the service should be begun, proceeded in, and concluded with a regard to God; and with a sincere wish to do justice to the argument, to the speaker, and to myself. A man who thus hears cannot fail, methinks, of being more or less profited.

But how much the reverse of this is the case in most Christian assemblies, you need not be told. The countenances of too many hearers force upon our minds a suspicion of their thoughtlessness and inattention, and their conduct afterwards

a See Dr. Addington's "Serious Address to Christian Worshippers, on the Importance of an *Early* Attendance upon Public Worship."

puts the matter beyond a doubt. But can this be right? No, certainly. *Who hath ears* then *to hear, let him hear.*—But there is,

THIRDLY,—A duty lying upon us after we have heard the word. And upon this you will allow me to be particular, as I apprehend the effect of the word, with the blessing of God, depends chiefly upon it.

Recollection is what I mean, together with self-application and prayer. *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* As if our Lord had said, "I have discoursed to you upon matters of the highest importance. Do not think, now the discourse is ended, that the business is all over. Carry away what I have said in your memories. Call it over in your retirements; consider it in every possible light it can be viewed; apply it to yourselves; make it the subject of your conversation with others; pray mightily to God for his blessing upon it; and frequently advert to it in the course of the week, that so it may have its influence upon your tempers, words, and actions." So the apostle, when he had been exhorting Timothy to his duty, adds, *Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things* a.

Now the business of recollection, if properly attended to, will require resolution, self-denial, and prudence. Give me leave therefore to assist you in it, by recommending the three following expedients:—Avoid as much as possible every thing that may tend to dissipate your mind, and render you incapable of consideration and recollection.—Be not fond of hearing more than you can retain and digest.—Make a point of retiring at the close of the day, for the purpose of recollection and prayer.

1. Avoid as much as possible every thing that may tend to dissipate the mind, and render it incapable of consideration and recollection.

Some will look upon this caution as savouring of pharisaical severity and gloominess, and scarce consistent with that cheerfulness which ought to prevail among Christians on a day they consider as a festival. Give me leave therefore, before I explain myself, to protest against every thing that looks like grimace in religion, or that tends to beget an unfavourable idea of

a 2 Tim. ii. 7.

any of its duties, as if they were hard and rigorous. No; the day we dedicate to divine service ought to be deemed the pleasantest in all the week. And if, when we fast, we should not be as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, much less should we be so on this day. Rather let us anoint our head and wash our face *a*, put on our best apparel, look smilingly on all around us, and *eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart b*.

But surely there are indulgences which, however allowable at other times, are not compatible with the right discharge of the duties of this day. Dress we must, but let us not employ so much of the morning in decking our persons, as to preclude the devotion of the closet and the family. Of the bounties of Providence we may cheerfully partake at noon, but what occasion for superfluities? These can scarce be provided, without imposing such services on our domestics, as will deprive them of the religious advantages they have a right to claim, and would otherwise calmly enjoy. The delicacies too of the table may prove a temptation, and indispose us to that attention which the services of the afternoon demand. A slight repast, therefore, seems the fittest for the intervals of public worship.

And, methinks, every sober person must see the great impropriety, not to say indecency, of receiving and returning visits on this day, and indeed of mingling promiscuously with any company but that of our own families. Suppose a man to have listened ever so attentively to the word preached, if the moment he passes out of the assembly he joins the company of vain, light, dissipated people, whose wish it is to get rid of every serious thought; how is he likely to be profited by what he has heard? Or if the company he falls into are of another cast, it is not improbable his attention may, by a variety of circumstances, be unduly diverted from the solemnities of public worship, in which he had been just engaged. In this way, I am persuaded, the salutary effect of impressions received in the house of God hath in a vast many instances been defeated. Is it not better then to retire calmly to our houses, and there pursue our duty in the manner good sense and our Bibles direct?

2. Be not fond of hearing more than you can retain and digest.

a Matt. vi. 16, 17. *b* Acts ii. 46.

There is such a thing as intemperance in regard of the mind as well as the body: and if excessive eating may be as hurtful to the constitution as excessive abstinence, it is also true of the mind, that the hearing more than is fit, may be very nearly as injurious as the not hearing at all. A great abundance of instruction poured into the ear, without sufficient intermission for reflection and practice, is extremely prejudicial: it confounds the judgment, overburdens the memory, and so jades the mind as to render it incapable of recollecting afterwards what it had heard, and of calmly deliberating thereon.

Where, indeed, the only object is the gratification of idle curiosity, and persons are more intent on circumstances than things; and where the preacher, instead of reasoning on the great truths of religion, and addressing himself to the consciences of men, spends the whole time in declaiming, allegorizing, or telling tales; a great deal may be heard with little or no fatigue or expense of spirits. But in such case what real good does a man get? he is amused without being edified. On the contrary, where the true end of attending on divine ordinances is proposed, two sermons a day, well studied and attentively heard, are in my opinion as much as people in common can any way digest and improve. For we ought ever to remember, that our view in hearing the word should be, not merely to have our passions touched, but chiefly our understandings informed and our hearts made better. Then are we profited by a sermon, when we carry away a clear idea of divine truth, and a firm persuasion of its authority and importance; and so are upon just grounds awakened, animated, and comforted by it.

Now how is it possible that he who has given close attention to three or four such useful sermons in a day, should be capable in the evening, if indeed he had time, to do justice to what he has heard? He will go home, at a late hour, fatigued with the business he has been about, and a mind occupied with a chaos of ideas which he has neither opportunity nor spirits to arrange, digest, and apply to their proper use. And so the pains both of the speaker and hearer prove fruitless. I appeal for the truth of what I say to reason and experience.

Upon this principle then, I cannot but think it my duty, to dissuade those who attend the service of the morning and after-

noon from frequenting lectures in the evening. These exercises doubtless have their use with respect to many who are so circumstanced as not to be able to attend the former parts of the day, who have no families, or who, if there were no places of public instruction to frequent, would be under a temptation to spend their evening in idleness and dissipation. And in so large and populous a city as this, the establishment of lectures to these purposes, at a convenient distance from each other, is an object deserving of particular attention and encouragement. But to you of the former description, give me leave with all freedom to say, it is your duty, when the afternoon service is closed, to go home calmly and seriously to your families, and see that the worship of God is duly observed there.—Which leads me to the last expedient recommended, in order to your deriving real advantage to yourselves from the word preached; and that is,

3. The making a point of retiring at the close of the day, for the purpose of recollection and prayer.

By *Recollection* I mean the calling over the substance of what we have heard, considering with ourselves the particular point discoursed of, the manner in which it was stated, the reasoning upon it, its agreement with Scripture and our own experience, and the uses to which it was applied. This seriously done, and followed with fervent prayer to God for his blessing, we may hope the great truths of religion will be deeply rivetted in our minds, make an abiding impression upon our hearts, and have a mighty influence upon our tempers and practice.

Prudence will direct how we are to proceed in these meditations, what time is to be employed therein, and what assistance we may receive by discoursing with our family upon these matters. But, in general, the duty itself is so reasonable and useful, that it should on no account be wholly dispensed with. As to time, there can be no want of opportunity, if you make a point of avoiding company, and securing the evening to yourself. As to composing your mind to meditation, that may sometimes be difficult, but it will not always be so, and use will make it more and more easy. And as to memory, though it be not so retentive as you could wish, the inuring yourself to the practice we are recommending will assist your memory; and then, you

are to remember, it is not words you are to recollect, but things.

And now I ask, whether this business we are exhorting you to, does not approve itself to your judgment and good sense as most fit and necessary. When a friend has discoursed with you upon any interesting matter respecting your temporal affairs, do not your thoughts naturally turn upon the subject when you and he are parted? Why then should you wish to get rid of all recollection, when you have been voluntarily spending an hour or two in hearing subjects discussed, which are confessedly of infinitely greater importance? Such conduct is disingenuous, foolish, and pernicious. It is a very unkind return to those who have been labouring, weeping, and praying for your good. It is acting after a manner which common sense, if its plain dictates were consulted, would condemn. And it tends directly to the depriving you of the greatest good, and the bringing guilt and misery upon your conscience. But I forbear at present to urge this, or any other branch of the duty recommended, upon you. Our business hitherto has been only to lay your duty before you; in the next sermon we are to enforce it.

PART II.

By the exhortation in our text, *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear*, our Saviour meant to remind his audience, that it was a parable he had been speaking—that the truth veiled under it was most important—that their seriously considering it was absolutely necessary to their profiting by it—and that, if they were not benefited by his instructions, the fault would be in the perverseness of their wills, rather than in the weakness of their natural powers, or any obscurity in the form of speech he had adopted. These things considered, we have proceeded to the object of this discourse, which is—to represent the duty which men owe to the word they hear—and to enforce it with suitable motives.

The first of these was dispatched in the former sermon. Here we set out with speaking of the duty of those who preach. They ought to consider well what they say; otherwise they cannot with reason expect the attention of their audience, nor

with decency require it. Now if we, whose province it is to address you, are conscientious in our preparations for public work, deliver ourselves with a plainness and solemnity suited to the importance of our subject, aim at the glory of God and your good, and have our eye directed to a divine influence for success; if we, I say, thus preach, we may surely, without the charge of arrogance, demand your most serious attention. This duty therefore on your part, we have proceeded to explain, shewing you—what kind of preparation is expedient previous to your hearing the word—how you ought to behave during your attendance upon it—and the duty that lies upon you after the service is concluded—And now we go on, as was proposed,

II. To enforce what has been said with suitable motives. And our first argument shall be taken,

First,—From the decency and fitness of the thing itself.

Good manners are of great importance in society; and there is no one precept held in more general respect among civilized people, than that of paying attention to those who speak to us. If, indeed, a man means to affront me, I am justified in turning away from him; but in all other cases such conduct is illiberal. It were unworthy of a prince to shut his ear against the meanest of his subjects whom he admits into his presence; and it would be deemed rude behaviour to treat a stranger after this manner who asks us a question as we pass the streets. But it is the height of indecency to suffer ourselves to be addressed in a set discourse, by a person of character, and whom we are acquainted with, and to give no heed at all to what he says.

Such is the case here. It is the duty of ministers to discourse to us from week to week of the great things of God; we regularly attend upon their ministrations: they are men of character, and no strangers to us; and yet, instead of well weighing their discourses, we treat them with indifference and neglect. Is this right? is this decent? To seem to hear and not to hear, is to act conformably neither to truth, nor to good manners. And how can such conduct be justified upon the common principles of prudence and decorum, setting aside all regard to religion? If therefore you would stand well in the opinion of your neighbours, as men of sense and good breeding, be per-

suaded to hear us; if not, go on in your old way, and be content to rank with a rude illiterate peasant, who treats the laboured discourse of a friend on some useful subject of civil life with stupid contempt.—To proceed,

SECONDLY,—Let me remind you of the particular obligations you owe to those whose ministrations you attend.

This is an argument addressed to ingenuity and gratitude. Suppose a friend apprehending some imminent danger likely to befal me, were to be at great pains to inform me of it, to intreat me with tears to take the necessary measures to escape it, and to offer me all the assistance in his power, should I not be much obliged to him, and ought I not to give him an attentive hearing? On the contrary, were I not only to forbear thanking him, but to turn away from him with cold indifference, would not such conduct be disingenuous as well as preposterous? Would not the feelings of my friend be greatly hurt, and all about me condemn my folly? Nor would it be a sufficient apology for such strange neglect, that I had my doubts of the truth of the story; for, however that might be, his good-will would be just the same.

Now, such is precisely the case here. Ministers warn us of the greatest dangers, and hold up to our view the most glorious prospects; with tears entreat us to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on the hopes set before us; offer us every assistance in their power; study, pray and preach to save our souls, and make us happy. And what is the effect of their endeavours? We hear them; but do we take pains to understand them? do we lay up the word in our memories, consider of it afterwards, and pray earnestly to God for his blessing upon it? No. On the contrary, like those in the parable, we *make light of it, and go our way, one to his farm, and the other to his merchandise* [a]; proceed from week to week in the old beaten track of hearing and forgetting what we hear, frequenting the house of God, and pursuing the world.

Now, I ask, is not such conduct both foolish and disingenuous? Certainly it is. Nor can you excuse it upon any other grounds than will fix an imputation upon your understanding, or your integrity, or both. For if you conceive of your mini-

a Matt. xxii. 5.

sters as weak and credulous, or as self-interested and designing men, the question will return, Why then do you attend their ministrations? Your hearing them, and going on to hear them, lays you under an obligation to them, from which nothing can discharge you, but that serious consideration of what they say, which we are so warmly recommending.

Let us, however, spend a moment upon the two excuses just glanced at. Are these men weak and credulous? Possibly some of them may. Yet we will venture to affirm, that in general they possess as good a share of understanding as others. It is acknowledged, indeed, that shining wit, profound sense, and great literary attainments are not necessary to qualify men to preach the gospel. *God has* sometimes *chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty* a. A plain man may clearly state, ably defend, and warmly enforce the great truths of religion. And a failure in point of accuracy and judgment, is no reason why you should not consider what is said, since the gospel is substantially the same. And after all, be the abilities of the speaker more or less distinguished, your presence, and especially your stated attendance on his ministry, gives him an unquestionable right, as we observed before, to demand your serious attention.

The other excuse is such as no man of a liberal mind would admit, unless compelled to it by the clearest evidence. And in that case, he would rather withdraw himself from the instruction of one whose views he had just cause to suspect, than urge his unfavourable opinion of him, as a reason for not duly attending to his admonition. But common charity will oblige men to conclude, that those who discourse to them of the great things of God, sincerely mean to promote their good. And whoever considers the temporal advantages which many of this character forego, and the various inconveniences and trials to which they expose themselves in the exercise of their ministry, will allow that the presumption is strongly in their favour.

It is admitted, then, that they who preach the word of the kingdom have your good at heart. And may not an argument be drawn from hence, to persuade you to consider seriously what

a 1 Cor. i. 27.

they say? Can you refuse them a request so reasonable in itself, and which will infinitely gratify them without the possibility of doing you any harm? Let the message they bring stand how it will at present in your mind, it is in their apprehension most true and important; and so far you give them credit. Can you wonder then, that seeing you in danger of perishing for ever, they are eager to pluck you as brands out of the burning? and that perceiving an infinite good in prospect, they ardently wish you to become possessed of it? Will you call this wish, this desire, this impulse of theirs, by any other name than good-will? Ought it not to attach them to you, and to draw forth correspondent affections in your breasts towards them? Will you take no account of their pains and labours, their struggles and conflicts, their tears and temptations? Shall they exert all their powers in the study of God's word, to possess you of the rich treasure it contains? Shall they pour out their cries to heaven day and night for you? Shall they travail in birth of you till Christ is formed in you? Shall they as his ambassadors, and in his stead, beseech you to be reconciled to God? Shall they, in a word, by all that is dear to them and you, entreat you to consider the things that belong to your everlasting peace?—And can you after all receive their message with cold indifference; forget it as soon as you have heard it; wish them, like those bidden to the marriage feast, to have you excused to the master of it; and send them back to him with this sad complaint, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* God forbid! O consider the pain this will give their hearts! And consider, too, on the contrary, the joy they will feel, should your conduct be the reverse of what has been represented. No external token of respect can they possibly receive from you, that is to be mentioned at the same time with this. This, this is the reward of their ministry.—Again,

THIRDLY, It is to be remembered, that preaching is a divine institution; and that they who are called to dispense the gospel have, by virtue of that call, a claim to the attention of those to whom they are sent.

I am sensible too many artful men have taken advantage of this idea to impose upon the credulity of mankind, and so to obtrude upon the world opinions of a pernicious tendency both

to the civil and religious interests of society. And too many, it must be added, under the character of Christian ministers, have challenged a kind of reverence from the ignorant multitude, to which they have no title; and without any view, it is to be feared, to promote what ought to be the grand object of their ministry. They have talked loudly of the dignity of the priesthood, of indelible character, and of I know not what occult quality annexed to their office, and the manner of their admission to it, independent of personal character. But these pretensions every faithful minister of Christ will reject with contempt, as no better than so many charms or spells, to enslave mankind to a sort of spiritual dominion, founded neither in reason nor the word of God. The position, however, just laid down, is capable of full and satisfactory proof.

If we will regard the authority of Scripture, preaching is a divine institution, and is to continue in the world to the end of time. When our Saviour ascended up into heaven, he commissioned his disciples to *teach all nations* a, and *to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature* b; and the promise annexed, *Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world* c, clearly shews that the commission was to extend to Christian ministers of every age and country. The phrase of *the end of the world* could not mean here, as it sometimes does, the end of the Jewish dispensation, for the persons to whom the gospel was to be preached, were of the remotest countries —every creature. It is plain therefore he meant to say, that preaching was to be received and acknowledged as his appointment; and that it should be succeeded through his influence and blessing, to the latest times.

The apostle holds the same language when he tells us, that *it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* d; and when he thus reasons with the Romans, *How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings*

a Matt. xxviii. 19. b Mark xvi. 15.
c Matt. xxviii. 20. d 1 Cor. i. 21.

of good things! So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God a. Agreeable to this we are commanded *not to despise prophesyings b*, that is, preaching; and to receive those who come in the name of Christ, with a regard suitable to the authority that sends them, and the importance of the message they bring *c*. And so there are many expressions of God's displeasure against those who contemptuously refuse them that speak in his name; and many promises of his favour and blessing to those, who receive the word gladly, and search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so.

As to the question, How may we know who are *called of God* to preach the gospel? it will be a sufficient reply to it here without entering into particulars which would carry us too far; that every man's reason, if he will make proper use of it, consulting at the same time his Bible, will enable him to discover pretty clearly who are not called of God: and it may and ought to be presumed of the rest, that he has raised them up and sent them. No one in his senses can suppose, that men who have not the powers of utterance—who are grossly ignorant—who live ill lives—who are manifest perverters of the gospel—who, weary of their callings, thrust themselves into the ministry against the opinion of wise and sober men, and the Christian societies to which they belong—or who have no reasonable prospect of exercising their ministry to edification—I say, it is not imaginable that such men are called of God. But those of the contrary description ought in the judgment of charity to be so considered and received, be the forms of their admission to this sacred office what they may.

And now surely an argument may be drawn from their *calling*, to persuade men to the serious consideration of the business on which ministers are sent. Though they are not vested with miraculous powers, nor exempted from the common frailties of humanity, they are yet as truly sent by God as were the prophets and apostles: and if by magnifying their office they may rouse the attention of their hearers, and so be the instruments of saving their souls, their using this freedom is not only allowable, but commendable. Yes, we will magnify our office, if by

a Rom. x. 14—17. *b* 1 Thess. v. 10.
c See Matt. x. 40.—Mark ix. 37—41.—John xiii. 20.

any means we may provoke you to emulation. We will presume to tell you that we are sent of God, if that will gain your ear—if that will fix your attention. In the name of God, then, and as ye will answer it at his dread tribunal, we command you to hear us—we require you to consider the message we are charged with.—O be persuaded!—But if ye will obstinately refuse, we can do no other than go back to him who sent us, and report your refusal. So we will do. Look ye to the consequence. If ye will perish—sad thought!—we—we must be to you a savour of death unto death.—But let us now go on to argue the point,

Fourthly, From the momentous nature of the business itself on which we are sent to you.

It is upon no trifling concern, no matter of doubtful import, we address you. The message we have to deliver is of the highest importance, and supported by the fullest evidence. In the civil affairs of life, *truth* and *importance* always give energy to a discourse. I am infinitely more affected with an argument that comes home to my property, person, and reputation, than with the curious speculations of a philosopher, the warm reasoning of a politician, or the amusing talk of an historian. I shall not be a moment determining which shall have my ear, he who comes to tell me of an estate that is fallen to me, or he who wishes to divert me with an idle dream. But the competition in this case is infinitely less, than that between the most weighty concern of the present life, and the salvation of an immortal soul.

Religion carries upon the very face of it an *importance*, not to be fully estimated by any human measures. It has for its object a Being of immense perfection, and for the seat of its residence a soul formed for immortality. It holds up to our view an infinite variety of truths, the most instructive and interesting. It possesses our minds of ideas, the most august and marvellous. It relieves our consciences of the bitterest pains, and pours into our bosoms the most refined joys. It makes a revolution in the soul, converts lions into lambs, and raises men from a state of abject wretchedness to the highest pitch of honour and happiness. It extends its influence through all the concerns of life, the vale of death, and an endless duration hereafter. It brings near to the eye of faith the invisible realities of an eternal world,

the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, the last judgment, the burning elements, the dissolving world, the general wreck of universal nature.

Would you frame an idea of the *importance* of religion?—listen to the dying groans of the incorrigible sinner—fix your eye on the placid countenance of the expiring Christian—hear the triumphant shouts of an army of martyrs, passing through the flames of persecution to the joys of heaven—descend into the prison of hell, and take a view of the gloomy mansions of the damned—rise thence to the abodes of bliss above, and mingle with the general assembly and church of the first-born—What shall I say?—go to Mount Calvary, and behold the Creator of the world expiring on a cross, to give existence to religion in the heart of man. Amid these scenes, every thing accounted great among mortals vanishes into nothing—expires like a taper in the full blaze of the sun. States, kingdoms, and empires disappear; the glory of the world passes away. And, on the other hand, the heaviest load of evils under which the Christian groans, becomes light and momentary.—And now if these are the matters on which we discourse to you, are they not of all others the most important? Should you not then give earnest heed to the things you hear?

But you will perhaps say, "Important as these matters may seem, if there is no *truth* in them, and they are only the reveries of a heated imagination, I am justified in paying no attention to them." True, you are. But then you ought to be well assured of your premises, before you draw your conclusion. On the contrary, you cannot but own it is possible these things may be true; yea, sometimes they strike you as highly probable. But we affirm that they are true, and bring positive proof in support of our affirmation. We tell you, there verily is a reward for the righteous, and a God that judgeth in the earth; and that we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we appeal for the truth of what we thus affirm, to the testimony of the most authentic records; to a series of miracles that cannot be rejected, without admitting facts more difficult to be credited than these miracles themselves; to a long train of prophecies, some of which have been fulfilled,

and others are now fulfilling before your eyes; to the purity and sublimity of the Christian doctrine; to the wonderful effects it has produced in the hearts and lives of men; to its progress in the world, amidst the powerful and persevering opposition it has met with from passion, pride, and prejudice; and to the consent of the wisest and best men that have flourished on our earth, and who many thousands of them have sealed their faith with their blood.

And will you amidst all this evidence dispute the truth of these things? Yea, more than this, will you confidently assert, that there is not the appearance of *truth* in them? For so much you must assert, before you can account with consistency for that inattention, from which we are so earnestly dissuading you. What horrid perverseness this! Shall we take you to the foot of Mount Sinai, and shew you the great God descending thereon, in fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest? Shall we lead you from thence to the sepulchre of the crucified Jesus, and present him to your view rising from his grave, and passing up through the clouds into heaven? And will you pronounce religion a cunningly devised fable? How determined such prejudice! How inveterate such enmity!

But, perhaps, you hold another kind of language. Like Gallio, the Roman deputy, you care for none of these things, nor are you anxious to find an excuse for your indifference. We tell you of a heaven and a hell, of death and judgment, of a Saviour and the great things he has done, of religion and the blessings it proposes, of a soul and all it is capable of enjoying and suffering; and you coolly reply, "It may be so for aught we know; we hear you, but will give ourselves no further trouble about it." What stupid infatuation! Surely such conduct, if persisted in, cannot fail of bringing down the vengeance of Almighty God on your devoted heads.

Hear the reasoning of the apostle upon this subject, when exhorting men to the great duty we are now enforcing:—*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at*

the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will [a]? Thus you see the importance of the things delivered, is an argument to engage our attention to them; as is also,

FIFTHLY, The necessity of consideration, in order to our profiting by the word.

A discourse that is not understood, believed, and felt, can do a man no good; it will neither guide his judgment, influence his temper, or govern his conduct. And whatever benefit we do receive from a discourse, it will be proportioned to the clearness of our perceptions, the strength of our faith, and the liveliness of our feelings. Let the matters, therefore, on which ministers treat be ever so momentous, if we affix no ideas to them, and so are neither persuaded of their reality, nor affected with their importance, we cannot be edified. But how are we to understand, believe, and feel, without hearing, reflecting, and considering? It hath been said, indeed, that some persons have been converted by a single word; and in such instances it may seem at first view as if there could be little, if any consideration. But this is a mistake. The word (suppose *eternity*) which, with the blessing of God, proved the mean of the man's conversion, did not operate as a spell or charm: it did not produce a change in his mind he could not tell how or wherefore. No. The truth is, his attention was fixed to the sentiment couched under the word; and so impressions were made on his heart, which, after a course of reasoning, issued in its conversion. It is then by attending, thinking, and considering, that men are converted. God deals with us as reasonable creatures. No new faculties are given us. The order of nature is not reversed. We are not required to understand without thinking, to believe without considering, or to feel without receiving impression. Of what importance then is the duty we are recommending! *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Nor does the doctrine of divine influences at all militate against this duty; on the contrary, it is a great incentive to it. While you are hanging upon the lips of the preacher, following

[a] Heb. ii. 1—4.

him from sentence to sentence, and endeavouring to comprehend his meaning, who knows but divine light may spring up in your minds, and a new bias be given to your will? *Faith comes by hearing a:* And while Lydia was thus employed, *the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul b.* While you are calling over what you have heard, examining yourselves by it, and searching the Scriptures to see whether these things are so; who knows but *God may give you understanding c; circumcise your hearts to love him d;* and *incline you to his testimonies e?*

The same obligation that lies upon us to discourse to you of the great things of religion, lies upon you to consider them. It is our duty, assured that *God will judge the world, to command all men every where to repent f; knowing the terror of the Lord* to persuade them *g*; and, having *the word of reconciliation committed to us, to beseech them in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God h.* We cannot, indeed, command success. But shall we, therefore, forbear the discharge of our duty? That would be most unreasonable and disingenuous. No. Animated by this divine doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit, we will apply ourselves with the greater ardour to our work. In like manner, it is your duty to hear, consider, read, and pray. A superior power, however, is necessary to renew your heart. But will you therefore neglect your duty? That would be most unreasonable and disingenuous. No; rather let this divine doctrine become an argument to quicken you, as well as us, with redoubled vigour to your duty. Consider what we say, and the Lord give you understanding.—But it should be further remembered, that as without attention and consideration there is no profiting by the word, so,

Sixthly, There are many obstructions in the way of this duty, the recollection of which ought to have the force of an argument to excite and animate us to it.

What these obstructions are, we have shewn you. Our Lord represents them in a very striking manner in the parable we have been explaining. He tells us that Satan, sin, and the

a Rom. x. 17. *b* Acts xvi. 14. *c* 2 Tim. ii. 7.
d Deut. xxx. 6. *e* Psal. cxix. 36. *f* Acts xvii. 30, 31.
g 2 Cor. v. 11. *h* 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

world exert their utmost powers to prevent the natural and proper operation of the word on the heart; and this their purpose they effect by dissuading men from a calm and serious attention to it. *Satan*, the wicked one, *comes and catches away the word as soon as it is sown, that they may not believe and be saved.* He endeavours to divert their thoughts from it while they are hearing it, or to excite prejudices in their breasts against it, or to hinder their recollection of it afterwards. What a subtle malicious adversary this! The heart too is indisposed to receive the word. It is hard and unyielding, like stony or rocky ground. The understanding admits not easily the light of divine truth; the will is not without great difficulty subjected to it; and the passions, carried away by an unnatural and violent impulse, prevent the due operation of the word on the judgment and conscience, and so defeat the salutary end for which it is preached. Men receive the word with gladness; but having no root in themselves, they endure only for a time; afterward, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, they are offended. And then the world is a great hindrance to the success of the word. As the thorns springing up with the seed choke it, so the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world, choke the word, and the man becomes unfruitful. His time is so taken up with the affairs of life, that he has not leisure for meditation. His heart is so oppressed with anxious cares, or so elated with the hope of gain, or so fascinated with sensual gratifications, that he knows not how to compose his mind to consideration. And the more deeply he enters into the spirit of the world, the more is his aversion to religion confirmed. So that *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man*, that is, a man who makes the world his object, *to enter into the kingdom of God* [a].

Now taking all these circumstances into view, and at the same time remembering what was just said of the infinite importance of religion; we possess a further powerful motive to consideration. The inattention of Archimedes to his personal safety, at the sacking of the famous city of Syracuse, was truly wonderful. So intent was he upon demonstrating his problem, that when the Roman soldiers entered his study with a demand on his life,

[a] Mark x. 25.

all the favour he had to ask of them was, that he might not be disturbed till he had finished the business he was about. Strange! Self-preservation, one would have thought, should have taken the precedence of every other consideration; and of consequence, taught him, before the fatal moment arrived, to dismiss his studies, and take the proper measures for his escape. And is it not equally wonderful that men should not feel the force of the motive we are now urging, in concurrence with that of the importance of religion, to provoke them to consideration?

If a man knew his house to be on fire, would he suffer his attention to be diverted from so alarming a circumstance by the amusements of the family, or the business of the accompting-house? No; his danger would so wholly occupy his mind, as to thrust every other concern from his view, and rouse him into immediate action. And shall we, whose life, whose happiness, whose all is at stake, suffer ourselves to be lulled into a fatal security by the machinations of Satan, the deceitful reasonings of our own hearts, and the vain allurements of the world? On the contrary, should not the insidious attempts of these enemies rouse our indignation, and their open assaults animate us to every possible exertion? What, shall the wicked one, like a bird of prey, watch his opportunity to catch away the good seed as soon as it falls on the ground, and we know it, and yet not be on our guard? Shall he go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and we see him approaching, and yet make no resistance *a*? Shall he have great wrath, because he knoweth his time is short *b*; and we none to oppose him, though we know our time is equally short? Shall he be ever plotting how to carry his malevolent designs into execution, and we be stupidly thoughtless and inconsiderate? Can such a base kind of cowardice as this consist with the character of men of sense and spirit? Let us take example of him, and if opposition creates watchfulness and attention on his part, let it have the same effect on ours.

This reasoning will likewise apply to all the other obstructions to consideration of which we have so largely discoursed, I mean those arising from irregular passions in combination with worldly cares and pleasures. The more loud and clamorous

a 1 Pet. v. 8. *b* Rev. xii. 12.

these disturbers of our devotion are, the more vigorous and spirited should be our resistance to their solicitations. Reflect then, we beseech you, when going to the house of God, while there, and as you are coming from thence, on this formidable confederacy among your enemies, to prevent your acquiring the most inestimable gain, and to secure your final condemnation: and let this alarming reflection rouse your attention.

SEVENTHLY, The authority that enjoins this duty upon us, adds infinite weight to all that has been said.

To attend diligently to the reasonings and persuasions of those who publish the gospel in our ears, is the solemn command of the great God: of Him who is above all, fills all, and is the end of all things; who made us, made us reasonable creatures, and will call us to an account for the use of our reason; who has heaven and earth at his disposal, and is at no loss for means to punish those who dispute his authority, and to reward those who diligently seek him; who, in short, can instantly blot us out of existence, or sink us into an abyss of endless misery. What an immense Being this! Can we think of him, and not shudder at the idea of wilful disobedience to his commands?

He hath signified his will to us, by the light of nature, by the holy Scriptures, and by the ministers of his gospel. Reason is the voice of God. It was given us to direct our conduct, and though enfeebled by human apostacy, it clearly teaches us our obligations to this great duty of consideration. The Scriptures too are the voice of God, and they enjoin this duty on us with the greatest earnestness and solemnity. *I have set watchmen over you, hearken to the sound of the trumpet a. Believe the prophets, and ye shall prosper b. Hearken diligently —Hear and your soul shall live c. Give earnest heed to the things ye hear d. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* It were endless to cite passages of this sort, with which the Scriptures every where abound. And then the voice of ministers, if agreeable to the Bible, is the voice of God; so that, as Christ says, *if we hear them, we hear him; and if we despise them, we despise him e.* And how earnestly they beseech us to consider what they say you need not be again told.

a Jer. vi. 17. *b* 2 Chron. xx. 20. *c* Isa. lv. 2, 3.
d Heb. ii. 1. *e* Luke x. 16.

Can it then be doubted whether that consideration we have been exhorting you to, is a duty enjoined upon you by the great God? It is his command; and will you pay no attention to it? When God spake those solemn words from Mount Sinai, *Hear, O Israel*; think you the wretch who should have dared to say, *I will not hear*; would have escaped instant punishment? No; the hands of the whole congregation would have been upon him; no eye would have pitied him. Nor can you with reason plead in excuse for your inattention, that God does not now speak to us, as he did then, with an audible voice from heaven. For if the manner in which he communicates his will to you under the present dispensation is more mild and gentle than under the former; if the small still voice of the gospel is better adapted to allure you to consideration, than that of an angel or one just risen from the dead; and if you have sufficient evidence of its divine authority, yea, the full compliment of external evidence arising from the union of the Mosaic and Christian institutions, it will follow that your guilt, instead of being extenuated, is in no small degree aggravated. *How then will you escape who neglect so great salvation a?* No excuse can be framed for your disobedience. It is rebellion, wilful rebellion, the utmost effort of rebellion. To say you will not obey this or that command of God, is horrid insolence; but to say you will not give him the hearing, is at once to violate all his commands, and to offer him the highest possible indignity. What punishment does not such conduct deserve? And can you wonder, persisting in your obstinacy, that the fierce wrath of Almighty God should smoke against you?

Hear the sentence of his word; it hath gone out of his lips, and will speedily be executed. *Every soul which will not hear, shall be destroyed from among the people b. They refused to hear my words, therefore, behold I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape c. Whosoever*, says Christ to his ministers, *shall not receive you, and hear your words, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for them d. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the*

a Heb. ii. 3. b Acts iii. 23. c Jer. xi. 10, 11. d Matt. x. 14, 15.

gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ a. What an awful day will that be! And can you lay your hands on your hearts, and say, that the language of the blessed God to such obstinate sinners in their extremity, is unjust? *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you b.*—But I have one argument more to add, and that is taken,

EIGHTHLY, and *lastly*, From the advantage to be expected from consideration.

That men are averse to this duty, the language of the text supposes; and it is a fact too notorious to be disputed. But upon what principles are they averse to it? Let us meet your prejudices, and endeavour to obviate them. Is the business, in the first place, *impracticable?* Do we require you to stop the tide, to tear up mountains from their foundations, to pluck the sun from his orb, or reverse the order of nature? No. We ask nothing of you, but what may be done, what others have done, and what you yourselves are capable of doing.

"But it is a difficult, painful, laborious kind of business." Say you so? Where is the mighty difficulty of listening to a plain discourse, carrying away the leading ideas of it in your memory, comparing them with the dictates of conscience and Scripture, and then going down on your knees, and begging God that what you have heard may do you good? Where is the hardship of all this? You can reason and strive to get this world; and pray why cannot you use the same endeavours about another? You think not much of spending hours in the pursuit of wealth, and at your pleasures; and why must it be deemed an Herculean labour, to fix your attention for one hour to a sermon; and to retire afterwards half an hour, to obtain satisfaction, whether what you have heard is true or false, of moment or of no account at all? If men will make mountains of molehills, be afraid of their own shadows, and consider every little exertion as hazardous to their existence; there is an end not only to all great exploits, but to the common businesses of life.

a 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. *b* Prov. i. 24—27.

Rouse then from your sloth, put on resolution, and set about the duty we are recommending.

"But," say you, "the result of consideration will, I fear, be unfavourable to me." So then you think consideration will do you harm. Strange! If that were the case, we ought to dissuade you from it. But would you be pleased, were we to wish you to take what we say for granted, without giving yourself the trouble to inquire into it? You would not. Why then should you be angry with us for pressing that upon you, the contrary of which would reflect a dishonour upon your understanding?—"But, you may chance to be persuaded of things you do not wish to believe." Aye, that's the matter. Here lies the grand difficulty. But how unmanly this excuse! Truth is truth, whether you do or do not believe it. If upon inquiry you become fully satisfied that religion is an empty dream, the event will be to your wish, and you will go on sinning with greater ease to yourself than ever. If on the contrary it should prove to be true, the knowledge and persuasion of this great truth, however unwelcome to you, may in the end be of infinite advantage. To urge men to the consideration of dangers which there is no possibility of escaping, would be cruel. But that is not the case here. Though it should turn out that you are a miserable sinner, in danger of suffering the wrath of God, and without any help in yourself; yet your case is not desperate, there is help in the gospel. The same motive therefore that induces us to hold up these painful truths to your view, should induce you to consider them. But be the event how it may, it is a reflection on your understanding and resolution to refuse to consider a question, for fear the reply to it should not be agreeable. And indeed this excuse of yours is a presumptive argument that religion is true, or at least that you have your apprehensions after all that it is not a delusion.

But you go on to object, "If I listen to your advice, and become a convert to religion, I must renounce habits I have contracted, break off my gay acquaintance, and give up all my future worldly prospects: and on the contrary, must be content to spend the remainder of my life in sadness and sorrow, deferring all hope of happiness to a future state." But if the matter were as you have stated it, admitting there is a heaven for the righteous, and a hell for the wicked, you are not justified in

conceiving of religion with horror, and starting back from consideration as an exercise utterly inimical to your real interests. If the habits you have contracted are evil, ought they not to be renounced? If the company you associate with are dangerous, should they not be shunned? If the eager pursuit of worldly gain and pleasure will inevitably involve you in misery, should not such pursuits be discontinued? And even though the remainder of your life were to be spent in self-denial and affliction, you would have no cause, with the hope of heaven before you, to regret the exchange you had made of the service of sin for that of God and religion. It is our interest to submit patiently to the severest discipline inflicted in the school of wisdom, if thereby we may be prepared for the exalted joys and services to which we are to be admitted when at man's estate.

But the truth is, if the event of your attention and consideration should be, what you at present dread, your conversion from sin to God; you will be a gainer in the highest degree, not in the future world only, but in the present. The pleasures resulting from peace of conscience, communion with God, the hope of heaven, the exercise of the Christian temper, and the practice of all those duties our divine Master has enjoined; the pleasures, I say, resulting hence are infinitely preferable to those which the gratification of our irregular appetites in their utmost extent can possibly afford. And O! what heart can frame a conception of one thousandth part of the bliss which awaits the Christian in the future world! But I forbear enlarging here, and refer you to the account given in the former discourse, of the blessedness of those whose hearts having been made honest and good, hear the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

I have only to add, before I dismiss the present argument, that as the duty of consideration is every where enjoined in the book of God, so it is enforced by the most powerful motives and encouraging promises. Time would fail me were I to recite them. It shall suffice to comprise them all in the expressive words of Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, and Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles. *Hear, and your souls shall live!* says the former *a*: *Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things;* is the language of the latter *b*.

a Isa. lv. 3. *b* 2 Tim. ii. 7.